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THE WESTWARD WAY

The book cover features a large, dark, weathered wooden signpost in the foreground, tilted slightly to the right. The signpost has a horizontal sign that reads "THE WESTWARD WAY" in bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. The background is a warm, orange-brown color with a textured, painterly appearance. In the distance, a winding road leads towards a small cluster of buildings, including a church with a tall steeple and a few houses. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century book cover art.

Amy Compere Hickerson

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Amy Compere Hickerson

The
WESTWARD WAY

by
AMY COMPERE HICKERSON

Published by
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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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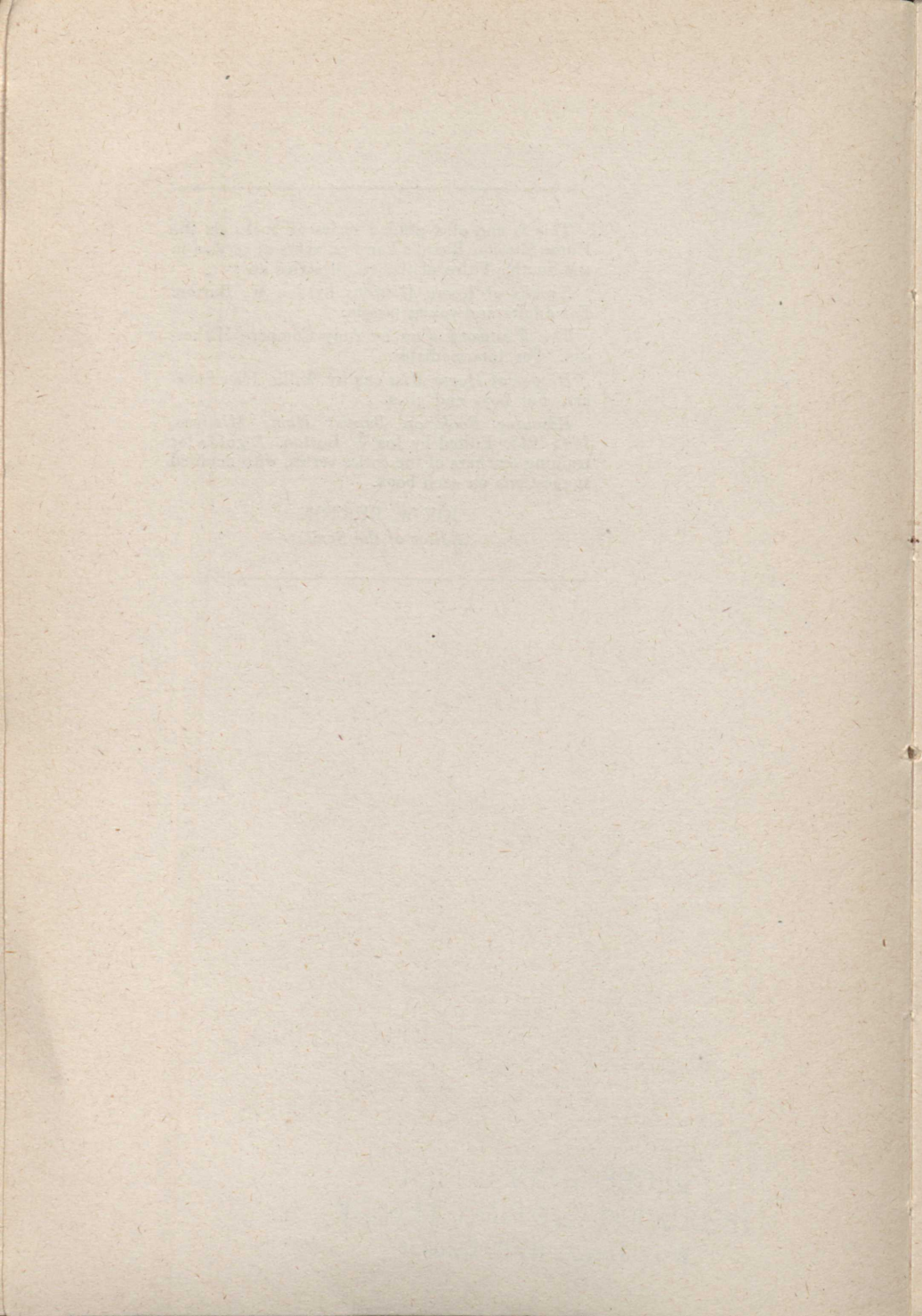
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*Thou hast given me the heritage of
those that fear thy name. Ps. 61:5b*

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO
THOSE TO WHOM I AM INDEBTED FOR THIS
HERITAGE

FOREWORD

In the following pages we have sought to present an accurate account of some pioneers who toiled and sang along the Westward way. They went out in high faith and with burning devotion in their hearts. They scorned difficulties and refused to allow hardship to hinder them in their holy endeavor.

Each incident, date, and conversation has been checked in reports, letters, magazine articles, books, and diaries. When there was no written proof to be found, "family tradition" has been so given.

Special thanks are due to J. S. Compere and Mrs. Minor Pipkin, son and daughter of the E. L. Comperes, for the use of many publications and letters which have been preserved from among their father's papers; and to Mrs. J. H. Couch, daughter of Thomas Hichichee Compere, the only person living today who remembers seeing her grandfather, Lee Compere, for such records as she has preserved.

Thanks also are due Dr. Garnett Ryland of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society for access to their valuable collection of Baptist records and for his kindness in helping to locate needed material.

More than to anyone else, thanks go to Una Roberts Lawrence who many years ago recognized this as a story that ought to be told and caused me to begin collecting the

records; and to my very co-operative family who assisted in numerous ways.

The last word of this book is "forward." It is the prayer of the author that that word may be the one that will linger in the hearts of the readers to inspire them to set out along the Westward way of progress in advancing the Kingdom.

AMY COMPERE HICKERSON.

September 9, 1944
Richmond, Virginia

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Cover design by Novie Maie Moffat

the Comperes moved to Market Harbor where John took over the shop which he had inherited from his father, along with the clerks and apprentices. One man had completed his apprenticeship there and had been employed by Mr. Compere for more than twenty years.

As was usual for the times, the family was quite large, four sons and five daughters being born to the good merchant and his wife. But four of the children died in infancy while two others lived only a short time; Anthony died at the age of eight and Nancy lived to be twelve years old. The loss of these children made the birth of Lee on November 3, 1790, a more than ordinarily joyous event; and nine-year-old Jane took the liveliest interest in the new little brother.

Jane was a precocious child, developed beyond her years and feeling the weight of responsibility even then. At the age of twelve her father and mother wished her to be confirmed. They sent her to the clergyman's house for conference and examination. He asked her to say the Lord's prayer and the Ten Commandments and inquired about her age. She told him she was "almost thirteen," which he said was a little young; but he agreed to the confirmation and Jane went home very much pleased. On the day of confirmation there was a class of nearly thirty, including an old man of seventy-four and one lady several years older. In writing of the occasion many years later, Jane said, "It was a merry day to me. The girls were all dressed very fine. I believe we all thought more of our fine frocks and pretty caps and ribbons than anything else. I know I did."

In January, 1794, another daughter was born, Betsy;

and Jane felt her responsibilities even more. But she loved Lee and little Betsy, and for a time her life was completely free from trouble. John Compere was a man strict in the rearing of his children, strict, too, in his loyalty to the church of England; and withal a father who provided well for his family and took pride in seeing that they lived comfortably. Had he been spared to them, the family history would have been different, indeed. But in November of the same year in which Betsy was born, he was suddenly stricken. He lived only a week after the stroke and was not able to speak to any one. Jane's heart was weighted down with sorrow and she felt that she wanted more than anything else to lie down beside her father and die too. She had often wondered when she heard children speak of a father or mother who had died, how they could live without them. Now she thought that for her it was impossible.

Mrs. Compere was in delicate health and with the burden of the family resting upon her, she leaned the more heavily on Jane, now that John was gone. Perhaps that was one reason why, when a suitor for Jane's hand came courting little more than a year later, the mother flatly refused him. He was a promising young man of twenty-four, just going into business for himself some twenty miles away; but he was a dissenter, a term abhorrent to the strict Anglican, and Jane was still quite young. The girl thought she "could have liked him very well," as she afterward wrote to a relative; but other things filled her heart and mind, and mother and daughter both supposed that there would yet be ample time for romance and marriage.

In less than a year tragedy again visited the little fam-

ily. This time the mother was taken. As she lay dying she called Jane to her bedside, gave her her wedding ring, told her to take care of Lee and little Betsy, whispered a prayer, and was gone. Bereft of both father and mother, Jane felt utterly desolate.

Friends and relatives were kind to the three orphan children and did what they could to console them. Lee and Betsy were put to board with an elderly couple whose children had married and gone into homes of their own. They lived with these people until they were old enough to be sent to school and were as tenderly cared for as though they had been in their own home. One significant fact about this couple cannot be overlooked. They were dissenters. One of John Compere's sisters had married a dissenter, too; and Jane had become acquainted with some people of the same faith who showed her many kindnesses and invited her to attend their church services. The Anglican Comperees were becoming better and more favorably acquainted with these odd people who belonged to a church called Baptist.

Jane, after a few years, was encouraged to start a school of her own. She had had more than the average education for an English girl of that time, so she opened a school for small children in Cranfield, a few miles from the town of Olney. Such schools were not uncommon. For the benefit of those who could pay a few pence weekly there were many schools, which taught reading, writing, and summing; and many men and women supplemented their domestic employment by teaching children.

It was in the town of Cranfield that Jane met a family

of Baptists who belonged to the church at Olney of which Dr. Sutcliff was pastor. From that time on she seldom attended the Anglican services, but in company with her new-found friends, she visited their church, went to their prayer meetings, and began to read her Bible more frequently. She knew that her friends were praying for her, she even timidly prayed for herself; but it was not until her twenty-fourth year that she made a public profession and united with a Baptist church.

In the meantime Lee had attended school for a time and then had gone to work, first as an apprentice, then as a clerk in a shop. Lee, too, had made friends among the dissenters and one cannot be greatly surprised to learn that at the age of fifteen he had become one of them. On the day that he was baptized he wrote to Jane, "I know that this will make you happier than to hear that I have become heir to a throne." Jane did, indeed, weep for joy and felt that she wanted to rush out and tell all her friends what the Lord had done for her only brother. When he wrote her some time later to tell her, in the quaint words of the period, that he had been called on to exercise his gift and study for the ministry, her happiness knew no bounds. It was with great satisfaction that she heard of his acceptance by Dr. Sutcliff and knew that he would go back to school and continue his studies at Olney.

Dr. Sutcliff had been Jane's pastor and she loved and honored him without, perhaps, realizing his importance. For this Dr. Sutcliff was one of the immortal five to whom credit must be given for launching the modern missionary

movement. He was one of the twelve ministers who with the Bristol student and young Deacon Timms met in the back-parlour of the widow Wallis in Kettering in October, 1792. He with Ryland and Fuller had helped Carey to prepare the *Challenge* to arouse the church to missionary activity. He had promised one pound and a shilling of that first missionary offering of thirteen pounds, two shillings, and sixpence, made October 2, 1792, and kept in a snuff box. As the missionary enterprise grew and interest increased with Carey's going to India, gradually the responsibilities were divided among the five. Carey was the missionary; Pearce became the mission's preacher and editor; Fuller its secretary, statesman, pamphleteer, and historian; Ryland, teaching in the Baptist school at Bristol, goaded his students into overseas' service; while Sutcliff was given the place of missions counselor and tutor of volunteers for foreign service.

Dr. Sutcliff had been trained by John Fawcett, the hymn writer, at Hebden Bridge and had continued his studies at Bristol where was located the only school of the Particular Baptists. After becoming pastor at Olney he had many pupils who lived in his home who were preparing for college or for the ministry. One of these young men who was studying with him at the time Lee Compere came was Eustace Carey, nephew of the great missionary William Carey and his first biographer. In that January of 1811, William Carey's father and step-mother had written to him, "Eustace makes great progress in his studies at Mr. Sutcliff's." In this atmosphere and with such associates, young Lee Compere could not fail

to catch the missionary enthusiasm which was to characterize him the rest of his life, and, he passed on even to the third and the fourth generation of his descendants. Nor was it long before this interest began to center in the call which was coming from the West Indies, especially from the Negroes of Jamaica.

As early as 1804 the Baptist Missionary Society had included in its report, "The state of the West Indian Islands came under consideration of our missionary society. Their attention was directed to Jamaica." Moses Baker, a Negro preacher of the island, corresponded with Dr. Ryland over a period of years, asking for white missionaries to come to their assistance. Dr. Ryland and Dr. Sutcliff were both much concerned to find the right man to send. Dr. Ryland wrote, "It appears that they would help to support a minister themselves, if a proper person were sent to them. I very much wish such a one could be found; possessing much prudence, humility, chastity, patience, and zeal." Later he wrote, "I cannot but think it is of great importance for us to send out some one speedily. I have waited for several years for some one to send."

At last John Rowe was set aside for this work on December 3, 1813. He reached Jamaica on February 23, 1814, and with great wisdom and consecration he began the work of a school at Falmouth. In a few months he was preaching to small congregations that soon became so large as to attract considerable attention. He wrote back to England for reinforcements. Lee Compere, who was at that time a member of the Baptist church at Halstead, in Essex, and who had been preaching for some

time, was appointed to go to Rowe's assistance as soon as arrangements could be made for the trip.

Young Compere's friends were much concerned for him because he must make such a long journey alone and advised him to take a wife. But such advice is not so easily followed. He had been "waiting on a young lady" named Marjorie. They seem to have been much attracted to each other but she was appalled at the thought of the voyage to Jamaica and even more afraid when she considered housekeeping in the West Indies on an island where the population was more black than white and where those with white skins were reported to live as though their hearts were black. Marjorie might have made an admirable pastor's wife in England but she could not see her way clear to become the wife of a missionary to Jamaica! So, many prayers were made for the young man that he might find a companion, like-minded and courageous, willing to hear the call to high adventure for the Master and to give her life with him in service.

A meeting was being held in London in Dr. Shenston's church and Lee Compere, missionary-elect to Jamaica, was asked to attend. There the people listened sympathetically as he told of his call to take the Gospel to the slaves of Jamaica; and they lifted their hearts in prayer for him that he might be strengthened and encouraged in the undertaking.

In the congregation the widow Voysey and her family gave earnest attention and after the services Lee was introduced to them along with other members of the church. Mrs. Voysey's two sons and three daughters were all

members of Dr. Shenston's congregation; but more than the others, eighteen-year-old Susannah had been interested and had been deeply impressed that she must go as a missionary to the heathen. She had discussed the matter with her pastor often, as well as with her mother. They were sympathetic with her desire to go to foreign lands to tell the story of Jesus; but the idea of going alone was preposterous. It involves no undue stretch of the imagination to suppose that the meeting between Susannah Voysey and Lee Compere was planned. This we certainly know, that the romance flourished rapidly. Dr. Shenston acted as match-maker and go-between and in a few weeks the young couple were married.

Lee brought his young bride on a brief visit to the country to meet Jane and Betsy, who were living together then in Cranfield. They were delighted with the new sister-in-law. Many prayer meetings were held in various Baptist churches in the vicinity for the two young missionaries. They must have visited nearby Olney, but with sadness, for Dr. Sutcliff had died in the previous year. One wonders whether Jane and Betsy were impressed with Susannah's London trousseau, for the widow Voysey was quite well-to-do and would have wished to provide suitable clothes for her daughter. But the only account we have of the visit, written many years later by Jane, does not mention capes and bonnets. It tells only how they loved Susannah and of the prayers of their friends; and how very hard it was to give up a brother and sister to go where they would never see them again. As a matter of fact, Jane did see them again and even made her home

with them, but at that time she believed that she was giving them up forever.

This visit to country kinsfolk over, they traveled by stagecoach back to London, there to take leave of Susannah's mother and other relatives; of Dr. Shenston and the dear church friends; and to finish last minute preparations for the long voyage to Jamaica. By stagecoach again they traveled, this time to Bristol, where on November 21, 1815, they, together with two members of Dr. Ryland's church at Broadmead, sailed for Jamaica.

Jane and Betsy continued to live at Cranfield; Jane still teaching school and Betsy engaged in lace-making. Many of their friends there had learned to make lace and found it a profitable employment. Not many weeks after Lee and Susannah left for Jamaica, Jane received a letter from Mrs. George Keely of Ridgemount in Bedford county, offering her a position in the school that the Reverend Mr. Keely conducted for young men. Mrs. Keely's sister who had had the place had recently married a Baptist preacher. Through Lee, who with Susannah had visited them and preached for Mr. Keely just before sailing for Jamaica, they had heard of Jane; so now she wrote offering her a position and a home with them, asking her to take a sister's place. It seemed a very attractive opening to Jane for she was dissatisfied at Cranfield. She still grieved over the loss of her beloved pastor, Dr. Sutcliff; and though she had willingly, even proudly and gladly, given up her brother for the cause of missions, she was lonely for him. Betsy preferred Cranfield and her lace-making; so the sisters separated.

Jane was received at Ridgemount with as much kindness as though she had been a sister, indeed, and the Keelys urged her to feel as if she were in her own brother's home and assured her that whatever the house afforded was hers. Oddly enough they called her "Compere" instead of "Jane." She was happy there and continued to make her home with them until the Keelys went to America in 1818, where he became the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Haverhill, Massachusetts.

It was while Jane was at Ridgemount that she received her first letter from Lee and Susannah in Jamaica. It created great excitement. Mr. Keely brought it in and waited impatiently for Jane to open it; but she was busy with trunks for some students who were getting ready to go home.

Finally he said, "Compere, if you don't come on I must open your letter for you, for I am on my way to a funeral and I want to hear the news before I go."

So she left what she was doing and went into the parlor where she sat down to read. Hardly had she commenced before the tears fell so fast that she could not see to go on. She asked Mr. Keely to read the letter for her. It had been written immediately upon their arrival in Jamaica and told little more than to describe the voyage which had been quite rough. Susannah had been seasick for three weeks and Lee had tried to be both doctor and nurse. They had had a kind and good captain who had done all he could for them. Mr. Keely was greatly pleased with the letter and read it to many of their Baptist friends;

and many prayers were offered for the work and the workers in the faraway West Indies.

Later letters told of settling at Old Harbour, of their first experiences at housekeeping in this beautiful island, their early attempts at teaching, and Lee's first church service and sermon.

The first Baptists in Jamaica were a Negro slave from Georgia named George Liele, and his wife. They had been brought to the West Indies by a British officer a few years before the end of the Revolutionary War. The officer lived only a short time after going to Jamaica and at his death gave his slaves their freedom. George Liele had preached to a colored congregation in America and he at once began religious instruction for the slaves and free people of color. This instruction was probably very imperfect and mixed with false and superstitious notions. Among his converts was another Negro, Moses Baker, who also became a missionary to his own people. A Mr. Winn had bought slaves in Kingston to take to his estate in St. James parish but he learned that they were much distressed because they would have to leave their church. Being a kind-hearted master, though not a particularly religious one, he agreed to take Moses Baker, their pastor, also, as a teacher and preacher for his servants. This Moses Baker was the man who had corresponded with Dr. Ryland and Dr. Sutcliff, asking for missionaries. It was in response to his pleas that John Rowe had been sent out in 1814.

Mr. Rowe had begun his work as inconspicuously as he could with a school at Falmouth, hoping not to an-

tagonize the government and to avoid persecution. Those in authority seemed willing enough for teachers to come out to the island from England but for many years now there had been a consistent effort to crush the missionaries. Indeed, we are told by dependable historians that the whole state of religion in Jamaica was deplorable. Among the Anglicans, whose rectors received large salaries from the government as well as enormous fees for weddings, funerals, christenings, and such services, instruction of slaves was hardly ever attempted and church doors in country districts were not opened even on Sundays for weeks or months together. A Presbyterian kirk succeeded in 1814 in securing an endowment from the poll-tax bill and in 1818 it was opened; not only whites but great numbers of slaves and free colored people attended. The Methodist missionaries had been severely persecuted and in 1815 the Assembly had passed a resolution to consider "the state of religion among the slaves and carefully investigate the means of diffusing the light of genuine Christianity, divested of the dark and dangerous fanaticism of the Methodists." Missionaries of other denominations had fared but little better and so it was, indeed, the part of wisdom to begin with schools rather than preaching services.

After consultation with Mr. Rowe, Lee and Susannah settled first at Old Harbour. The place was beautiful as only a tropical island can be with an abundance of flowers and fruits, brilliant butterflies, palm trees and oleander. The heat of the tropical climate was greatly lessened by constant breezes from the sea and by vast masses of clouds.

The air was described as "remarkably light and enlivening, producing great cheerfulness even in old age." They were able to secure living quarters and with the few things Susannah had brought from London they began housekeeping.

They had not been at Old Harbour long until the Negro Baptists from Kingston came with an urgent request for them to come there. A license from the mayor had been secured for Lee to preach. So the English teacups and spoons, the little doilies and lace mats that Betsy had made for them, their books, all their personal belongings, were packed up and moved to Kingston.

Located on the south shore, Kingston had been incorporated as a city in 1803, and was quite proud of itself in consequence. In 1804 an order of the king had opened to the merchants of Jamaica the trade with the Spanish colonies in South America, and Kingston became a kind of emporium, from which the Spanish colonists obtained large supplies of British manufactured goods, chiefly cottons. The war of 1812 had only recently been concluded and Waterloo, bringing peace between England and France, was in July of 1815. As a result, business had increased enormously in the islands. Large quantities of sugar were produced and coffee plantations abounded. The coffee planters were, for the most part, residents and spent a large part of their income in the colony.

One might suppose then that Jamaica was in a most prosperous condition; but many years before the planters on the island had begun to have their trials because of the relations existing between the owners and the slaves.

Such an iniquitous system as slavery could never be permanently prosperous. In 1808 the African slave trade had been abolished but as late as 1835 there were still more than three hundred thousand slaves in Jamaica. The feeling between masters and slaves had produced some terrible catastrophes in the way of slave revolts and retaliation by the white masters.

The moral condition of the white population of Jamaica in the early nineteenth century was described as appalling. After the peace of 1815 made ocean traveling less perilous, a great improvement took place in the habits of the more respectable white people because many families sent their children to England to be educated. But this change was only beginning when Lee and Susannah started their work in Kingston. The lower classes of white inhabitants led in many cases unenviable lives. Coppersmiths, saddlers, coopers, and a few other working trades, were able to perhaps for every one who succeeded, twenty succumbed to the climate.

There were great numbers of colored people of mixed races who formed an important part of the population. secure the comforts of life as well as its luxuries; though Those who were slaves were usually taught trades or became domestic servants, more frequently nurses. By far the greater proportion of those fairer than mulattoes were free. They were uneducated and superstitious with a religious faith not far removed from that of their ancestors in Africa. They believed in witchcraft and practiced Obeism which is described as "an irresistible spell, withering and palsyng, by unwanted sensations and

resistless terror, the unhappy victim. The obeah man collects such ominous things as mould from a grave, human blood, a piece of wood fashioned in the shape of a coffin, the feathers of the carrion crow, the tooth of a snake or alligator, pieces of egg-shell, and other ingredients, to compose the fatal mixture . . . two or three of these ingredients at least are indispensable." They also believed in ghosts, supposing that they forebode death or some other great evil; and their funeral rites were of a most superstitious nature.

Here then in Kingston the young missionaries began their labors, in the midst of thousands of so-called Baptists, many of them slaves, who because of their circumstances, their ignorance and superstition, and their utter lack of trained leaders, had been found in the most distressing disorder. Lee undertook to reorganize the local church, examining each member carefully. When he administered the Lord's supper there were only two hundred whom he believed understood and were ready to participate in this ordinance. A month later, though he had exercised the utmost care, there were four hundred. At least he was able to see that the service was conducted decently and in order and he was spared the embarrassment that old George Liele had suffered on two occasions.

The story is told that once when the church was about to celebrate the Lord's Supper, "a gentleman, so called, rode into the chapel, and urging his horse through the midst of the people to the very front of the pulpit, exclaimed, in terms of insolence and profanity, 'Come, old Liele, give my horse the sacrament!'

"Mr. Liele coolly replied, 'No sir. You are not fit yourself to receive it.'

"After maintaining his position for some time, he rode out. On another ordinance Sabbath, three young gentlemen walked into the chapel during service; and going up to the table where the bread and wine had been placed, one of them took the bread, and breaking it, gave it to his companion, who, with a horrid oath, swore it was good ship bread, presenting it to the third, who refused to take it."

Kingston society had improved to such an extent that Baptist congregations no longer had to fear such insults and persecution. Indeed, on several of the large estates a great revival of religion had broken out and the task of teaching these new converts and bringing about orderly church organizations was enormous. At times it seemed all but impossible and Lee began, as Mr. Rowe before him had done, to write to England for reinforcements.

In June Mr. Rowe was stricken with tropical fever and in just a few days died. His work had been greatly blessed and it seemed nothing less than tragic to have to give him up. But somehow the younger missionaries managed to carry on.

In August the Comperes welcomed their first little daughter. Jamaica began to seem really like home to them then. Susannah rapidly regained her strength and, with the baby sleeping in her native-made cradle and cared for by a colored nurse, the young mother was able in a short while to be back in the school room and helping Lee with his services. She loved to sing and found a

ready response from the little children in the school and from the large congregation that soon crowded the chapel in Kingston.

She must have been homesick sometimes as she heard the familiar tunes that she had sung so often in her own church in England; and after a while the warm, balmy climate of Jamaica must have seemed less like the airs of Paradise as she remembered the cool, damp London fogs of her childhood and thought of them as utterly refreshing. But if she had such feelings they were not recorded, and she seems to have taken delight in the work they were doing in Kingston.

On January 8, 1817, Lee wrote to the committee in England, making an urgent appeal for more missionaries. He told of baptizing fifty persons just two days before and "Here are," said he, "many souls continually crying out in their broken English, 'do you not care for the black man's soul? Come over that big water and instruct us poor black Negroes.'"

The Missionary Committee had, indeed, been trying to provide for the work in Jamaica and on February 7, 1817, Mr. James Coultart, a native of Hollywood, in Dumfries, and a student at Bristol, was solemnly dedicated to such service by the Broadmead church, and sailed away for the West Indies. After a long and tedious voyage, he arrived in Kingston to find that malaria had laid its debilitating hand on Lee Compere and that he was so weak he could hardly walk across the room. Susannah was finding it impossible to teach school, care for a lively baby and a sick husband, and keep the work all running

smoothly. Only the grace of God could have carried her through this difficult period.

When James Coultart arrived, the Compares had just been told by the doctor that they must leave Jamaica for Lee could not hope to live in such a climate. He advised them either to go back to England or on to America. One of the historians says also that the committee was not altogether satisfied with Compere's work and were not unwilling that his connection with the Society should be thus terminated. He does not mention the cause of dissatisfaction, but family tradition has it that it was because Lee and Susannah had given too much of their time to the Negroes instead of the white population of the island.

Greatly discouraged over the seeming failure of their hopes and plans, the Comperes prayed for strength and guidance. To go back to England seemed unthinkable and not to be considered. As they prayed for leadership, there came word that a ship was soon to sail for Charleston, South Carolina. Believing this to be the answer to their prayers, again they packed their personal belongings, and again with their faces turned toward the West, they sailed away to an unknown land.

The sea voyage was most refreshing after tropical Jamaica and from the very first day out Lee's health steadily improved. Susannah, too, enjoyed the change and the food on the English sailing vessel, so different from what they were usually able to get in Kingston. Happily they began to look forward to a new work in America as they wondered what Charleston would be like. They talked of their Baptist friends there, some of whom

they had known in England, and of the new friends they would make.

They had not been out to sea many days, however, until it was evident that something was very wrong with the baby. Suddenly she developed a fever that was soon dangerously high and in a few brief hours the little eight-months-old daughter had died. It was with inexpressible grief that they buried their first-born at sea.

When the ship sailed into Charleston, one would hardly have recognized Lee and Susannah Compere as they went ashore, for the eager, young missionaries who had landed in Jamaica scarcely two years before. Malaria saps one's vitality almost to the vanishing point; and sorrow in a night can bring youth to maturity. Sickness and grief had undoubtedly changed them, but nothing could alter their faith in God and their hope for the future. Confidently they left the ship, sought out a little inn that the ship's captain had recommended, and by a little Negro messenger boy sent a note to Dr. Richard Furman, pastor of the Baptist church of Charleston, introducing themselves and asking to meet him.

CHAPTER II

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE CREEKS

There is very little recorded of the next few years of the Comperes and of their experiences in South Carolina. Dr. Furman, then sixty-two years old, kindly and understanding, answered their note as soon as possible and took the lonely young missionaries to his own home. Such Christian hospitality must have warmed their hearts and helped them quickly to feel at home in America.

They soon found a place of service in Charleston Association and Lee preached in various churches in and near there. It seems that he also went to school again, for in a list of beneficiaries of the ministerial education aid fund that was provided by South Carolina Baptists for 1791-1825, Lee Compere's name appears. At that time ministerial students were placed under the care of some preacher where their studies were directed and where books were available; or sent to some academy or college; perhaps under special circumstances one might be sent to the new theological school in Philadelphia or in Washington. Where Lee studied after he came to South Carolina, the records do not tell. In England he had been under the instruction of Dr. Sutcliff and had spent some time at Bristol. Perhaps Lee and Susannah continued to live in Dr. Furman's home and studied under him.

It was not long, however, until they moved to a home of their own and Lee became pastor of a church in Sumter

District. It was here at a place called Vasty Branch that another little daughter was born, whom they named Frances. During the next year they lived in Georgia where in 1820 Nancy Jane was born.

Just when the family returned to South Carolina one cannot be sure; but when the South Carolina State Convention was organized on December 1, 1821, Lee Compere was one of the delegates from the Charleston Association, together with Richard Furman, William Dossey, Joseph B. Cook, William B. Johnson, and Richard M. Todd. This was the first Baptist state convention in the Southern states and only one other, Massachusetts, had been organized in the North.

In order to understand the state of affairs among Baptists in America at this time, one must recall that it had only been eight years since the Judsons and Luther Rice, missionaries under appointment of another denomination, sailing to India on different ships, had become converted to the Baptists beliefs. In 1813 Mr. Rice returned to America to present their case to the Baptist world. Up to that time there was no organized group of Baptist churches in America; but when Rice went up and down the land telling the Baptist people of the missionaries they already had in India and of their need for support, there was a wave of missionary interest aroused. This resulted in the formation of the Triennial Convention, so called because it met once in three years, in Philadelphia in 1814. Dr. Furman was elected president. With great wisdom and deep devotion, he plied his talents to stimulate interest not only in the support of Ann and Adoniram Judson in India

but also in missionary effort on behalf of the Indians here in America.

Lee Compere had known the great missionary leaders in England and had had experience as a missionary himself in Jamaica; so when he came to Charleston, he threw himself with enthusiasm into this American missionary movement. Many times he and Susannah talked about it and wondered if they would ever themselves be missionaries again, privileged to tell the Good News where it was "news."

In the meanwhile, Susannah supplemented her meager housekeeping equipment with what she could buy in Charleston and what her brothers and sisters sent her from London and made a home on Vasty Branch for Lee and the two little daughters. Lee preached when he had opportunity, but always his eyes were turned toward the West and he watched with eagerness as plans began to mature for the Baptists to begin work among the Creek Indians then living in Georgia and Alabama.

The Congress of the United States had appropriated ten thousand dollars for Indian Reform, to be expended annually and at the direction of President Monroe. The president believed that this sum should be applied in cooperation with benevolent associations. The American Baptist Missionary Society had already begun work for the Indians in the Mississippi valley where Isaac McCoy was their missionary. The way seemed to be opening for a beginning among the Creeks. Even before this time, in 1818, reports to three Georgia Baptist Associations had stressed their responsibility to take the Gospel to these

uncivilized people in their very midst. In the same year some of the Creek chiefs had asked for schools and teachers and had even suggested that the Indians themselves might support the work after it was started.

The result of all this was that a plan was finally worked out. The school was to be under the patronage of the American Baptist Board of Missions; directed by three Georgia Associations, Ocmulgee, Georgia, and Ebenezer, and such other associations as might wish to help, and run according to the regulations prescribed by the Government for Indian Reform. In 1820 Dr. Staughton, mission secretary, reporting to the Baptist General Convention, had stated that the Federal Government had contributed liberally to the western stations, these being among Indians of other tribes, and that they would likewise help in a new station among the Creeks.

It was not until 1822 that the work was actually commenced. The first superintendent appointed, the Reverend Mr. Flourney, was unable to accept. The committee then turned to Lee and Susannah Compere and challenged them to undertake this new and difficult work.

In making the report to the general board, the secretary stated, "Compere is a man in whom your Board have confidence, as to character and talents and hope to find a heart and temperature of mind suited to the station in which they had the happiness to engage him. He makes no requisition on the Board for his services, but a comfortable support for himself and family, for which your Board have not hesitated to pledge themselves, on your behalf; and remove himself and family, consisting of a wife and two

small children, from South Carolina to the Nation. And the Brother, for himself and wife, 'gives himself to the Lord and to us by the will of God, to the best of his endeavor to promote and effectuate your generous designs among the Indians, according to instructions afforded from time to time.' "

Rev. Jesse Mercer, Georgia Baptist leader, had gone with the newly-elected missionary to interview some of the Creek chiefs and to find a suitable location for the school. In May he had written, "Brother Compere perhaps is in the nation by this time." He had also reported that they had drawn on the Georgia Association for five hundred dollars to begin the work; but he added that this was because this association was "in funds" and they would look to other associations to continue the support.

The place selected was Tucheetachee on the Chattahoochee River at a place about thirty miles from the present site of Montgomery, Alabama. The mission station was at first called by the Indian name but this was soon changed to Withington in memory of a great Baptist of New York who had given liberally to the support of missions.

When everything was ready, Lee and Susannah again packed their household goods and prepared to move on Westward to set up a home, this time in the midst of a people who had, indeed, never heard the name of Jesus and to whom they believed that God was leading them to tell the Good News.

The household by this time had considerably increased in size. Another little daughter had been born in South

Carolina not long before the proposed move to Tuckee-batchee, to whom they had given the name Elizabeth; and Lee's sister, Jane, had come from England to help them with the mission school. Jane continued to make her home with the Keelys until they decided to come to America in 1818. On October of that year the Reverend Mr. Keely had become pastor of the First Baptist Church in Haverhill, Massachusetts, where, his biographer says, "he established a reputation for being one of the ablest ministers in the denomination in Massachusetts."

Shortly thereafter Jane had come to South Carolina. Susannah was overjoyed to have a sister to whom she could turn for companionship. More than anything else she had missed her English home in London. Her brothers and their families and her sisters had made a merry group; and she had longed many times for them and for her mother. Susannah never doubted her call to mission service and she loved her husband and her own home deeply; but there had undeniably been times of homesickness and loneliness. Jane brought a breath of England when she came and she was welcomed with open arms by brother and sister and the little nieces.

Uncle Hiram and Aunt Esther, two Negro servants, had recently been added to the household also. Their loyalty and devotion were to be of great help to Susannah, making it possible for her to give her time to the school with a mind at rest about her children. They would also help Lee in the mission work through their contact with other Negroes who were slaves of the Indians, inviting them to services, themselves taking an active part; in many ways proving

valuable assistants in the work at Withington Station.

So, happier than they had been since they had sailed away that November day nearly seven years before from Bristol bound for Jamaica, Lee and Susannah began the trek from South Carolina to the heart of the Creek nation on the Chattahoochee River. With their goods carefully packed in two covered wagons, they with Jane and the baby rode ahead in one, while Uncle Hiram and Aunt Esther with the two little girls, brought up the rear.

The July, 1823, issue of the *American Baptist Magazine* has this to say, "The Reverend Mr. Compere, with his family, consisting of his wife, three small children, and his sister, together with a young man named Simons, in the character of teacher, removed to the Station five weeks ago. Contracts have been made for suitable buildings."

That same year it was reported to the Georgia Association that "the institution so long held in anxious anticipation among the Creek Indians, is now in successful and promising operations, under the superintendence and management of brother Compere and his devoted associates. Between thirty and forty children have already submitted to the entire care and direction of the missionaries." They also have thanks for "several benevolent females" in the church at Shiloah for clothing they had sent to the mission; but they had added that it would be more practical to send the cloth and let it be made up at the station into such garments as were needed.

In 1824 the report to the General Baptist Convention showed that "the Station is going on with prosperity, the Indians themselves manifest a lively sense of the impor-

tance of instruction . . . Brother Compere has exerted his utmost efforts for the welfare of the establishment and is entitled to the love and respect of his brethren." They reported, too, that the mission buildings leaked and that there would have to be an appropriation in addition to that which the Government supplied.

In the meeting of the Ocmulgee Association it was said that "the progress already made surpasses our expectations. The superintendent's books and accounts have been submitted to examination and found correct." At the Georgia Association meeting they were told of a gift "presented by J. H. Walker from a benevolent female society in the church and congregation at Greenwood, of about five hundred yards of cloth for the clothing of the children at Withington Station." And that "the President of the United States has taken a lively interest in the support of our institution, and has given it a good proportion among others." Specimens of writing, and a letter of appreciation from one of the boys in the school were shown.

Lee himself wrote in December of 1824, "In our school, everything is going much to our satisfaction. We have forty-two steady scholars, who, in general, improve beyond our expectation. More than half that number are reading in the New Testament; as many are writing; some are committing words, with their meanings; three are ciphering in division; three in multiplication; and some are commencing.

"A few weeks ago I heard some of the girls repeat the first and second chapters in John's gospel. Last Sabbath I heard the whole Testament class read the eighth chapter

of Romans, and catechised them as they proceeded, much after the following manner, 'to whom is there now no condemnation?' 'To them that are in Christ Jesus' . . . When we call to mind how recently we commenced our efforts, and the difficulties we had to contend with for some time, and then consider the improvement the children have made, we cannot help saying, 'Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.'

"We are very much in want of little books, suited either for school or rewards. Perhaps among your good friends you could make up a small packet and forward it."

Jane's comment on some of the teachers who assisted at Withington Station, taken from a letter she wrote to a relative, points up the picture. Said she, "Brother Simons went with us as a teacher. We were all very fond of him. He was a real missionary. His whole heart was in the work. He lived with us about three years and then left to study for Burma. We then had Brother ———, but he did not feel that same interest in the mission that Brother Simons did. He was too much afraid of his hands being hurt or his clothes being dirtied. In fact, he had rather be waited on than anything else. We had about fifty Indian children beside our own family. We had but little time to wait on Brother ———. The Indians all loved Brother Simons. He had many friends there. When he left it was a weeping time. We felt as if we had lost a brother."

It must have been shortly after the experience with the brother who did not want to "hurt his hands or get his clothes dirtied" that Lee wrote to the secretary of the Mission Board, "There is at present no white person at the Station but my own family. It would be a considerable re-

lief to us, if others could be procured whose hearts are fully engaged in the work, whose bodies are fitted for labor, and whose minds are prepared for discouragements."

In order to carry on the work, John Davis, one of the Creek boys who attended the school, had been engaged to act as interpreter and to help in other ways, such as taking charge of the boys when they worked in the field. John was to receive for his services five dollars a month.

This John Davis became very useful as an interpreter and Lee wrote of him, "Perhaps I shall be permitted to bury in baptism one of our scholars, John Davis. We have long believed him a Christian . . . he has a great anxiety for the welfare of his people; and though I should never be able to preach the gospel to these poor heathen (in their own language) I trust that this boy will and that God through him will make me see the triumphs of the cross."

On July 8, 1827, he wrote, "This morning I enjoyed the satisfaction of burying in baptism our young friend and brother, John Davis . . . This is I believe the first full Indian, who has thus solemnly dedicated himself to God. May he be the first fruits of a plentiful harvest." John left the mission two weeks later to visit his own people and wrote back that he "enjoyed much pleasure in talking to his own people about Jesus Christ" and that they were very attentive. "This," wrote Lee in his journal, "was as a cordial to my drooping spirits. Oh that the Lord would take this youth into His hands, and make him abundantly useful."

God did use John Davis greatly as a minister to his own people and Lee Comper lived to see him recognized as a

leader among the Creeks after the nation was moved west. When a church was organized, September 9, 1832, in the Indian territory, it took the name of Muscogee Baptist Church and among the charter members were "John Davis, missionary, and three black men, Quash, Bob, and Ned, slaves of the Creeks who had been baptized east of the Mississippi by Lee Compere."

Jane and Susannah both taught in the mission school and spent much time in training the Indian girls to sew and in other household arts. Susannah was a sweet singer, and she used her gift to teach the Indians as well as their Negro slaves to sing the gospel songs, even venturing translation of hymns into the Creek language and some simple compositions of her own. There was not much poetry in them for the Creek language does not permit poetry; but they are full of Jesus and the gospel. One of them that was often sung and greatly loved was:

Mekosapa toe yachkat,
Oketut awolichin; iathlanise.
Jesus ehlof kawopkekatee
Pasomechateluntose.

Literally translated it reads:

Christian friend,
The time is drawing nigh; I am going;
When Jesus died, had He not risen,
Poor sinners would have been lost forever.

Dr. H. F. Buckner, a later missionary to the Creeks after their removal west, says of this hymn, "this is as near a translation as can be given in English, but much is neces-

sarily lost in any literal translation from Creek to English. It is very forcible in their language, and contains the gospel idea that Christ's resurrection was as necessary to our salvation as his death."

The language of the Creeks was not the least of the obstacles in the way of the missionaries. Lee wrote of it, "There are many difficulties to be overcome before a foreigner can either speak or understand it, and all these must for the most part be overcome by dint of his own application, as there are neither books nor men to afford any instruction." The Compere children began to pick up phrases and to speak the language before their parents; and they were all singing together, Indians, Negroes, and white people, long before they could carry on a conversation.

After long study and diligent application Lee began to make translations of parts of the Bible. He wrote in his journal, "Hoopohleyhohola with his wife called to see us. To them I read the translation of the first chapter of Genesis. Whether it be a correct translation or not I cannot tell; but it seems to convey the general ideas contained in the chapter; as those who understand both languages, if requested to give a translation, will always give the idea if not the exact words, correctly."

And later he wrote, "This day I forwarded to the Department of War, a translation of the Lord's Prayer, and the first chapter of Genesis, with a vocabulary of Indian words, which had been previously requested."

Colonel McKenny, agent of the Government, said of him, after visiting the station, "I find in Mr. Compere all

the necessary qualifications both in acquirements and disposition to make himself useful to these people; besides those of an ordinary kind, he has made himself well acquainted with the structure and grammar of their language, and begins to speak it."

So completely did the missionaries become identified with the Creeks that when the first Compere baby was born at Withington Station, the old chief called to pay his respects and gave her the Creek name of Muscogee. She was also given her mother's name and was known as Susannah Muscogee. Some years later when the long hoped for son was born, this same chief came again to pay his respects, arriving after dark.

Lee asked him to name the baby but the old chief said, "Do you want him to grow up without sense?" and waited until the next morning.

With the rising sun he named the little boy Thomas Hichichee. This was the name of the first Muscogee chief the English ever knew. He had been taken to England by General Oglethorpe in 1734 but had returned to America and died in Georgia, being buried at Savannah. He was much revered by the Creeks and in giving the missionaries' son his old chief's name, the present chief had shown his gratitude and his acceptance of these white people as friends.

While the school work was being carried on at Withington Station, Lee was often away for long periods of time, preaching in Baptist churches; making missionary addresses in the interest of the station; sometimes preaching

to small groups in frontier communities where there were no churches.

One of the first trips he made was to Powelton, Georgia, in June of 1822, where he had a part in the organization of the Georgia General Association. All members of the local Baptist church as well as those from distant associations were invited to participate, laymen as well as ministers. The Rev. Mr. Jesse Mercer was elected president. In 1827 the name of this organization was changed to the Georgia Baptist State Convention.

Lee missed the organization of the Alabama State Convention which took place in 1823 at the Salem church in Hale County, not far from where the town of Greensboro is now located, but he attended some of its earliest sessions. Of one of them he wrote, "Left home with one of our Indian boys, to attend the Alabama Convention; the school being left in charge of Mrs. Compere. On my way preached to the inhabitants of Mount Gimery. Early next morning arrived at the place of meeting, where we met with many friends of the Mission, by whom we were received with Christian joy . . . Surely it is good to meet on this side of eternity, with those whose hearts beat in the main in unison, and whose general conduct seems to say, 'Let us go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' "

On the return trip he preached at Greensboro, then rode twenty-two miles and held services at Marion. The next day he reached home and wrote that night in his journal, "We arrived home and found all well. How grateful ought I to be to the Preserver of all men for His preserving goodness to me and mine. I go out and leave my dear family

in the midst of uncultivated men; but in the hands of God. I return and find them in health."

Sometimes the work was very discouraging. The naturally taciturn temperament of the Creeks was in sharp contrast to the responsive Jamaicans. It must have required strong faith to go on reporting two or three conversions where in his earlier work he had baptized fifty and more in a single day. On one occasion he wrote, "This week has been a time of perplexity, trial and fatigue."

He tells of inviting some of the Indians who were visiting at the school to attend family worship and says, "They were attentive, and, as is usual with them, assented to all that was said. But this is no certain evidence that they believed it, as it is their custom on all occasions to be thus courteous."

There are many references in his journal to family worship, to which they always invited any people who happened to be about the station. He wrote of one such experience, "This day being too weak to ride out, I conducted worship at home, to as mixed a company as could well be assembled together, consisting of whites, blacks, Indians, and mulattoes of different descriptions, with the children of Jews, heathen and professed Christians, the children of the forest, and those of civilized life. Oh, how it would rejoice my heart, to see from such a motley group a company devoted to the Lord."

Visits with John Davis to the Indians were part of the regular schedule of the mission station. One such trip is described as follows:

"November 27. Left home with John Davis, for the purpose of visiting the Afaulee Indians. About sunset we arrived at Yhoholy Mikko's, whose house, yard and everything about him, bore evident marks of advancement in civilized life. Both he and his wife received and entertained us with much kindness; and we spent about two hours talking about the creation, fall and redemption of man. Everything was heard with attention.

"November 28. We rode with Yhoholy Mikko about seventeen miles, to meet the Indians in their square. On the way we called at the houses of several persons, whose children were at school. So soon as we arrived, they attempted to impress us with a sense of their friendship, by setting something before us, and inviting us to eat. The fare was homely, but it was sweet and clean, and derived excellency from its being given with a cheerful countenance and a hearty welcome.

"About dark we arrived at the talk house, and found the Indians partly assembled. As it was a season of business, I informed the Chiefs that when they had finished, I should like to talk a little with them. They cheerfully consented, and said, that as soon as they had finished what they had to do, that I should be informed, which was not till daylight the next morning. During the interim of business, the greater part of the Indians spent their time in dancing. As it was a severe night, I preferred to seat myself with them, in their hot house, where I was under the necessity of being an eye witness of their folly. Poor creatures! While they tried to express their friendship by shaking hands, and exchanging tobacco with me, they little thought how heartily I pitied them.

"November 29. At day-break I was informed that their business was over, and that, if I thought proper, I could give them a talk; but it was intimated that it would be better to retire to a neighboring house, as many of the Indians had become intoxicated, and would be troublesome. We accordingly did so, and Yhoholy Mikko then collected some of the sober people as were disposed to attend, and I gave them a short talk; first about the education of their children; and then about the salvation of their souls; after which I returned to my family."

The problem of drinking Indians was one that had continually to be dealt with. On one occasion Lee had gone away and left the school in Susannah's care. That Sabbath morning she had called all the mission children into the chapel for services which she conducted in her husband's absence. It so happened that a large number of the Negro slaves of the Indians had also managed to slip away and were taking part in the worship, a matter which had become known to their masters and which displeased them. Just as Susannah gave out the lines:

"Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude,"

it was discovered that the mission yard was full of drunken Indians, evidently bent on mischief. The Negroes turned to the missionary for help. She could only tell them to pray and to behave themselves like Christians.

Uncle Hiram, seeing his mistress in such distress, was for a more aggressive line of action, "You jes' say de word, Missus, an' I cuts dem drunk Injuns down like weeds!"

But she restrained him and in their helplessness they saw the Negroes taken out and cruelly whipped for attending the services.

When Lee came home the next day and heard the story, he rode to the Indian court, or council, walked boldly up to the scowling chief and took a seat by his side. Seeing the bad temper of the Indians and that they were trying to frighten him, he turned and looked the chief in the eye and said mildly but firmly, "I am not afraid of you."

Presently the chief began to smile. At the proper place in the council, Lee was given permission to speak and he began to remonstrate with the Indians for their cruel treatment of their slaves. While he was pleading with them, one of the prominent chiefs raised his club to strike but since he was behind the speaker, Lee did not know anything about it until he had finished what he had to say. Afterwards this same chief came to Mr. Compere and apologized, saying that he could not and would not kill so good a man.

One cold, damp March day, Lee was called on to attend an Indian who was suffering with a sore throat. Since he belonged to a family of medicine men who were also doctoring him with their Indian remedies, it was almost impossible to help him.

In telling of the incident Lee wrote, "There is something singularly unmeaning in their medical prescriptions. Before anything can be done for a patient, the old fire on the hearth is put out, and a new fire is made. This is to be set apart especially for the use of their physic; if anything else happens to be cooked on it, the charm is supposed to

be broken, the doctor leaves, the Indians all become offended, and the patient, if other remedies are not at hand, is left to suffer. If he happens to be a husband, his wife is forbidden conversation with him, or to do anything for him. No medicine is used until a round of the most foolish ceremonies has been performed, such as blowing through a cane in water, and muttering over it a set of sounds which nobody understands, but which are supposed to be acceptable to the genius of medicine."

It was the latter part of April of the same year that Lee undertook to fill an appointment to preach and nearly lost his life in a swollen stream. After three attempts to cross, he finally succeeded and arrived in time to hold services in the home of Mr. Smith where he preached to "the people in the neighborhood, whites, Indians, and blacks.

"On my way home," he wrote, "as I was crossing the Nofaabee Creek, I was thrown out of a canoe, and was near drowning. It was in a rapid current, and much out of my depth; and had it not been for the bough of a tree which extended into the water, and which I laid hold of, I see no way I could have been saved. This is the second time the Lord has delivered so unprofitable a life out of deep water since I have been in this country. . . . I ought to view myself as more than ever the Lord's."

The Indians seem always to have been much more interested in the school than they were in the religion of the missionaries. From the very first they gave only respectful attention for they believed that Christianity was good enough for white people and Negroes but that the Great Spirit had given his red children a religion far

superior to that. However, they were willing enough for their slaves to become Christian, if it did not interfere with their work. Later when some of the Creeks from the leading families did accept the new religion, the chiefs began to forbid even the slaves to attend services and whipped them severely when they disobeyed.

There are many references in Lee Compere's journal to services held after nightfall for these slaves. He tells of a prayer meeting one night in June with a group in the chapel of the school, followed by the observance of the Lord's Supper. "It was night, dark night, almost midnight, perhaps later than when our blessed Lord first distributed the emblems of his love to his twelve disciples; but late as it was, I trust he was with us of a truth. Permission having been given to some of our scholars to sit up and witness the scene, they did so. After it was over I separated myself, and took a seat on the step at the entrance of the passage, that I might enjoy my own reflections."

While he sat there, one of the school girls came to talk with him about the service and to tell him that she wished to become a Christian. She was so overcome with emotion that Lee called Susannah to talk with her; and together they explained the way of salvation. When they asked her what had caused her first to think seriously about this matter, she told them that it was the words of a visitor to the school, a Mr. Faxton, who had told her that he hoped she would find something even better than knowledge while she was there.

Lee adds in his journal, "This ought to encourage Chris-

tians not to forget to speak a good word for Christ."

The day that this school girl was baptized was one of the high points in Lee Compere's life. The baptismal service was just at sunset and the girl's father, who himself was not a Christian, had come to see his daughter baptized and was much affected by the scene. Afterwards they returned to the chapel where following a brief service, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was observed.

Lee wrote, "Oh, it was a solemn, a melting, a delightful season! Surely Jesus was there. If I ever realized communion in a Saviour's death, it was there."

Little Frances Compere had witnessed the service and was also deeply moved. She said to Susannah, "I heard what my father said—and I understood him—he talked about your going to heaven, and I wanted to be there."

And Lee wrote, "Oh, that that Saviour who took little children in his arms and blessed them, may take this my babe and prepare her for himself!"

It was well for the missionaries that they had these occasional moments of encouragement for conditions among the Indians were becoming more and more distressing. Lee's journal tells, "This week we have been thronged with Indians, who came from different parts to attend a council of the Nation. Poor creatures, they are in a distracted condition. They know not what to do. In their council capacity they have displaced two of their principal Chiefs, and put others in their place. We fear, while we hope, that it may ultimately terminate well."

In 1819 General Jackson had overcome the Creeks and

part of their land had been acquired by the United States; in 1821 by treaty more had been ceded to the white men; and in 1825 still another treaty, signed at Indian Springs, had given them a large tract embracing more than seven counties. Many of the Indians bitterly resented the loss of their lands and felt that they were being betrayed by their own chiefs when the treaties were signed. Led by an Indian chief called McIntosh, they agreed among themselves that the next man to sell any land to a white man should die for it. Some time later this very man, McIntosh, sold his land and was executed by the Creeks.

The part that many white men played in dealing with the Indians during this period is not one of which any of us can be proud; and it did much to counteract what good the missionaries were able to accomplish. Feeling became tense; the Georgia associations withdrew their support of the mission several years before the station was discontinued; the Triennial Convention, however, maintained the work until the Creeks were moved west of the Mississippi. The final report to this Convention states, "They (the Indians) have prohibited even their slaves from hearing the gospel, and prevented such of them as had become pious from attending even privately on the means of grace, without exposing themselves to severe punishment. . . . How far this spirit of opposition is to be traced to the Indians may be considered very doubtful . . . under the influence of better men than their advisers, they might have been induced to adopt a different conduct. About this time, Mr. Compere received an invitation to become the pastor of a church, and the Board approved of his accepting it; and resolved to suspend the Mission for the present."

No further work was undertaken by the Baptists for the Creeks until it was resumed west of the Mississippi.

Once more Susannah and Lee made plans to move. Lee had organized a church in Montgomery County, Alabama, which took the name of Rehoboth. This church had asked him to become pastor, and the Comperes decided to go. Some of the Creeks who were still friendly begged them to take their children along, too, and continue to teach them, to which they agreed. When the time came to move, the household, besides their own family consisting of Jane and the children, Uncle Hiram and Aunt Esther, included also the Indian children. Fortunately they had not far to go. They had secured a farm about ten miles from the present site of Montgomery and near the Rehoboth Church, and were soon settled in the new location.

This was hardly more than a frontier community and afforded ample scope for missionary work. Susannah and Jane continued the school at home while Lee preached not only in his own church but in many needy sections where no church had yet been organized.

In 1829 Lee Compere was elected president of the Alabama State Convention; and late in November of that year he made a trip to Montgomery where on the 28th of November he helped in organizing the Bible Society of Montgomery and was elected president. The American Bible Society had been organized in New York in 1816, and this society was organized according to the same pattern. A number of years later it was reorganized as the Alabama Bible Society, non-sectarian, with representatives from all the churches on the board of directors and a

secretary was chosen "to follow in the consecrated footsteps of Lee Compere, in forwarding this vital work."

The day following the organization of the Bible Society, a small group of Baptists met to organize the first Baptist church of Montgomery. There were four charter members, John Gindrat, J. R. Crosby, Margaret Wiggins, Mrs. Lee Compere. Lee, who presided at the organization, was called as pastor. The membership rapidly increased and for a time the work prospered. But internal discord caused them to disband for a season. They reorganized August 11, 1832, and again called Lee Compere as pastor. It was under his leadership that the first house of worship was built.

While the Comperes lived on this farm in Alabama three sons were born to them: William, of whom we shall hear more later on; John Ryland, who lived only a few months; and Ebenezer Lee, who was destined in an especial way to carry on the work begun by Susannah and Lee.

The circumstances of the birth of this ninth and last of the children of Susannah and Lee were unusual. Lee with Jane, the two older girls, and some Negro servants, had gone to Mississippi, to see about locating on a plantation in Yazoo County. Susannah with the younger children had remained in Alabama. The trip had proved quite satisfactory, property had been secured and the party was ready to return to Alabama, when floods of rain made the roads impassable and they were delayed for many weeks. It was not even possible to send a message. Susannah watched and waited, expecting at any moment the return of her loved ones. When week followed week and still there was

no word, she concluded that they must have been drowned in the flood, attempting to get home.

It was during this time that her baby was born. She named him Lee for the father whom she supposed to be dead and Ebenezer, for she said, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, or neither mother nor baby would have survived."

It was not much longer before the Mississippi party returned with glowing reports of what they had found; of the plantation in Yazoo County, of the warm welcome that friends had given them. And when the spring came, once more the Comperes were all packed up to move on Westward.

CHAPTER III

FACES TO THE WEST

The Mississippi of 1833 was a frontier state with all the problems and the crudeness of a new country; but there were also oases of culture. This found expression in many of the plantation homes and in a surprising number of schools for girls, Female Institutes, as they were called. As a matter of record, the first college degrees conferred in the state were conferred on two women in 1832.

Susannah had recently come into possession of considerable property from the Voysey estate in England. In consequence, the Comperes were able to begin this new home in greater comfort than any they had enjoyed before. They also began to look for a suitable school for their two older daughters who were fast growing up. Frances was by this time fifteen and Elizabeth nearly twelve. Little Nancy Jane had died soon after the Comperes moved to Withington Station, and Susannah Muscogee, Cogee she was to her family, was still too small to be sent away to school. She and her brother Thomas Hichichee were being taught at home. William and the baby Ebenezer played in the big yard of the new home, undisturbed by the problem of becoming educated.

This was in the late spring of 1833. Lee became pastor of two country churches and preached often in other places where no church had yet been organized. Susannah and

Jane continued to gather the Negroes of the community in Sunday schools as they had in Alabama, and they took an active part in the "benevolent female society," forerunner of our modern Woman's Missionary Society. Jane wrote of that period, "All went on very happily that year."

In the summer of 1834 an epidemic broke out in the community that threatened to sweep away the entire population, black and white alike. Frances and Elizabeth were in school thirty miles away. Even if it had been thought best for them to come home to help take care of those who were sick, it was impossible to get anybody to go for them.

Jane said in a letter, "At that time there was so much sickness that nobody could be got to go anywhere. We were surrounded with the sick and the dying. Many of them died of congestive chills. Susannah and myself waited on the sick and sat up so much that we were both taken down together. She was in feeble health before. I never had a fever in my life till that time."

Susannah became desperately ill. In her delirium she seemed to be once more in London sitting with her mother in Dr. Shenston's church; again with the little first-born daughter in her arms, she thought she was leading some black Jamaican children to sing the songs she loved so well, but oddly enough her fever-distorted brain caused her to break out in the Creek songs she had composed for the Indians at Withington Station. In lucid moments she realized that her life was almost spent and she wondered what was to become of her children and how Lee would continue his work without her. Life had not been for her what she had expected. So much more of her time and strength had gone into the care of her family and the up-

bringing of her children. But she never lost sight of her first dedication to missionary work.

Now as she lay sick and helpless, realizing that there was so much to be done and feeling that she had not accomplished what she had hoped to do, she asked for her baby, delicate Ebenezer Lee, not yet two years old. She prayed for all her children that they might be used of the Lord; but with her hand on the baby's head, she asked an especial blessing on him and prayed that through his life the work that she and Lee had begun might be continued.

Susannah died September 6, 1834. Nineteen years, just half her life, had been spent in missionary service to which she had dedicated herself when she was only seventeen years old. There are many things one would like to know about her, but even in family traditions there is no word of how she looked or what she wore or any other personal thing except as it relates to her missionary activity. The published accounts of her life say that "she was born of wealthy parents in the city of London, an educated English lady of extraordinary character." They tell of her teaching little children; of conducting worship services in her husband's absence, even leading in public prayer, which was an unusual thing for a woman of that day; always they tell of how she loved to sing. Jane, too, wrote to relatives about her, "How often have I heard her sing the nineteenth psalm:

*The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,
In every star Thy wisdom shines,
But when our eyes behold Thy word,
We read Thy name in fairer lines.*

and another I expect you and your brother are well acquainted with:

*Grace, 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear."*

Lee listened as a minister friend conducted the funeral service, using for a text, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." His mind must have gone back across the years to the service in London when he first met the young daughter of the widow Voysey. How quickly they both had believed that that meeting was in answer to prayer; and nothing doubting, they had set forth together on a mission that they confidently believed was ordained of the Lord. Better than anyone else, Lee knew how faithfully Susannah had fulfilled her trust and even in the hour of sorrow his heart sang a hymn of praise for their nineteen years together.

It was fortunate, indeed, that Jane, who could remember so well the loss of her own mother, was there to care for the children and keep the home intact. She must have been further reminded of her youth and the young dissenter merchant whom she thought she "could have liked very well," for Frances, young as she was, had a suitor. Tall, handsome Samuel Lattimore, graduate of Hanover College in Indiana, had only recently joined the Baptist church. He had been a member of another denomination when he came to Mississippi to teach the year before. Now he was much interested in everything the Baptists were doing. Lee cultivated his friendship and had been

pleased to have him for a companion in the various meetings they attended. Perhaps he hardly suspected the romance that was growing between his eldest daughter and this dignified young man with the "fluffy hair almost a golden hue, the ideal of a senatorial statesman," whom he so much admired. When Frances came home from school at the time of her mother's death she did not return; and before the year was out she was married to S. S. Lattimore.

The following June Lee sold his farm and took his family to Tennessee where they boarded with a family named Fuller and where the children were sent to school; and, Jane said, Lee was kept busy "riding about and preaching and attending different meetings." In less than a year they returned to Mississippi and bought a home in Holly Springs, where Lee opened a general store and began to operate a saw mill. One characteristic of the early frontier was a deep-seated prejudice against a salaried ministry. Lee was no longer employed by a mission board and he could hope for only a small income from his churches. On the other hand his family was increasingly expensive. So it seemed necessary for him to give part of his time to something more lucrative than preaching. He was pastor of churches in Tippah and Marshall counties besides preaching at Aberdeen, nearly a hundred miles away; and he did not give up his missionary work in communities where no churches had been established.

The Baptists in Mississippi had begun to organize as early as 1806. It is interesting to notice in the Rules of Decorum for this first association in the state such items as these:

"Only one person shall speak at once."

"No brother shall be suffered to whisper or laugh during the conference."

In 1824 the Mississippi Baptist State Convention was organized, but the strong anti-missionary spirit that prevailed in many parts of the state at that time caused such dissension that it was disbanded in October of 1829. So bitter did this feeling become in some churches that on one occasion Lee Compere was turned out of the church where he held membership on no other charge than that he was a missionary. In less than two weeks he had been received into the fellowship of another Baptist church whose members believed as he did, that Jesus meant what He said when He told his disciples, "Go ye" and "Ye shall be witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Other missionary-minded Baptists did not cease their efforts and finally in 1836 a permanent organization was effected at Washington, Mississippi, on December 4. Lee Compere was present and was elected to what one would call today the state board of missions. It was the third time he had been a part of such a Baptist meeting on his westward trek. The first was in Charleston in 1821 when a South Carolina Baptist State Convention was organized; the second was at Powelton, Georgia, when he participated with his brethren in forming the Georgia General Association in 1822, which became the State Convention in 1829. Alabama, as has been already mentioned, organized in 1823 when Lee was at Withington Station and in 1829 he was president of that Convention.

At this organizational meeting in 1836, Ashley Vaughn

was elected president of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention, and S. S. Lattimore, Lee Compere's son-in-law, who had just been ordained to the gospel ministry, was elected the first Baptist general agent, or, as would be said today, executive secretary.

It was this same year of 1836 that Lee married Miss Sarah Jane Beck, the wedding taking place in the home of the Whitfields. Jane Compere described her as "a very pious, good woman, a member of the Baptist church." And she added, "How thankful we ought to be to our Heavenly Father for providing such a kind and good friend to take the place of your dear mother. I do not think a better could have been found."

Ebenezer, who was only three years old at the time of the marriage, loved her dearly and in later life wrote of her, "She was a kind-hearted, intelligent lady who took great pains in teaching her step-children, but especially she took an interest in teaching the scriptures to her 'little son.'"

There must have been an unusual affinity between the Becks and the Comperes, for some years later Elizabeth married Pinkney Beck, brother of Sarah Jane, and after his death she married another of the Beck brothers.

The home in Holly Springs was comfortable and well furnished, not only with tables and chairs but with books and music and fine fellowship that made it a gathering place for many of the Baptist leaders of the day. The children were growing up with better advantages than one might have expected in so young a state, peopled only with pioneers. But in 1837 and 1838 the banks began to

fail all over the country and the financial situation became acute. Lee Compere had signed a note for a friend who died heavily in debt and in consequence he lost all their property in Holly Springs, including their home, and the family moved out in the country where they still held an interest in a saw mill and where the older boys, Thomas Hichichee and William, worked to help support them.

Ebenezer was too young to work, but not too young to get into mischief. He loved to fight, and the older boys in the neighborhood loved to tease him, which often landed him in trouble. On one occasion he took the fish from his father's fish traps and gave them to these neighborhood boys in order to impress them with his importance. Not satisfied with this, he released the dam of the mill pond to get more fish. Instead of catching fish he lost his balance and was thrown head foremost into the rushing waters where he was almost drowned. Still greatly upset after rescue, both because he had lost his new hat and because of what his father would say, he wandered about in the woods, cold and wet, until Aunt Jane found him and brought him home. She and his stepmother comforted him and let him carry out his plan to send by the wagoner to Holly Springs for a new hat which he paid for out of his own money; and he supposed that his father never knew anything about the affair.

From earliest childhood Ebenezer expected to be a preacher, and by the time he was four years old he would gather his father's little Negroes about him for a congregation and pray and preach and sing. This ambition and

the sincere efforts of Aunt Jane and his stepmother seemed to have little effect in keeping him out of trouble. His father was away a great deal, often not returning from a Sunday preaching engagement until Wednesday night; and as the boy grew older he more and more needed a man's hand to direct him.

Susannah Muscogee had married Matthew Lyon, and in 1843 they had gone to live in Pickensville, Alabama, where Matthew had a printing office. They offered to take young Ebenezer into their home and let him work in the printing office. This offer was the more readily accepted not only because Lee Compere was away from home so much but because there was now a little sister, Sarah Channing, who required the attention of her mother and Aunt Jane. So to Alabama with his brother-in-law, Ebenezer went.

It was said of Matthew Lyon that he was "first a printer, then a lawyer, then a preacher, and all the while personally great. . . . He received the magic touch of Luther Rice, William Dorsey, Basil Manly, R. B. C. Howell, Lee Compere and Richard Furman. The Lord preserves the moulds in which he was cast and only now and then uses them, when he needs a great man for a grand work." It was fortunate, indeed, that Ebenezer Lee Compere came under his influence at this time when he so much needed direction. Susannah Muscogee saw to it that her little brother was well dressed and that he had such advantages as Pickensville afforded.

Even under these favorable conditions Ebenezer's inclination to mischief often led him into scrapes, more or less serious. On one occasion he pretended to be a crazy

man from the country and nearly frightened the tipsy postmaster out of his wits; when he was teased by a boy too large for him to fight, he ran to the well and drenched his tormentor with a bucket of cold water. At one time he discomfited a gang of hoodlums who were trying to throw him in the mud and soil his new broadcloth pants and jacket, by turning suddenly and throwing a shovelful of coals at them. An old gentleman, who had watched the whole thing, called Ebenezer into his store and gave him a book as a reward for his cleverness. He valued this book so much that long years after he had boys and girls of his own, he still kept it as a treasured possession.

These pranks were not so important as his work in Matthew Lyon's printing office, the books he read, and the information that he absorbed by association with the men who came and went in the Lyon home. All together he was learning a great deal about people. And though he did not talk about his ambition to anyone, he still cherished in his heart the desire to follow in his father's footsteps and be a missionary-preacher.

At about the age of fifteen Ebenezer came back to his father's farm in Mississippi for his oldest brother, Thomas Hichichee, was leaving for Arkansas. This brother had become a Christian at the age of twelve and was baptized into the Salem church in Tippah County by Elder Jeremiah Burns. The same church had licensed him to preach, and at the age of eighteen he was sent to Howard College in Alabama. For lack of funds he was not able to graduate, so he had come back home where he helped his father on the farm and in the mill, preaching when he had opportunity.

Now he had married Miss Eliza Pettigrew, sister of a Mississippi Baptist preacher, J. L. Pettigrew; and, like Lee and Susannah before them, the young couple were preparing to move on towards the land of the setting sun, to carry the Gospel.

Who can adequately explain the lure of the West? "Partly it was the call of the unexplored, partly a desire to extend Christ's Kingdom on earth. Along with the redemption of the wilderness was a desire to see men's lives redeemed," wrote one historian. And he added, "The early Baptist ministry of the South has never been excelled in its unquenchable zeal in providing the destitute with the gospel. These heroic men braved all dangers and endured every hardship in their determination to preach. Rarer exhibitions of missionary zeal were not illustrated even during the apostolic age."

Ebenezer thought a great deal about his brother in the new missionary work in Arkansas and believed that he, too, would be glad to be called into such service. Then he remembered how much fun he and William were having, frolicking around with the crowd, attending the dances in the community, keeping late hours. He did not realize how deeply this distressed his father until he heard Lee one morning at family worship begin to pray for his boys and become so overcome with emotion that he could not go on with his prayer. Ebenezer Lee was not yet a Christian, but he resolved then and there to act differently; the fun he was having was not worth that much distress on his father's part. Lee was not long in noticing the changed behavior of his son, though no word was said, and he

rewarded him by giving him the most valuable work in his library, a cyclopedia of twelve large volumes published in London in 1813 called "The Pantalogia" for which, in his more affluent days, he had paid one hundred and twenty-five dollars in gold.

In the summer of 1849 a meeting was held in the Montaches Creek church where Lee was pastor and where the Comperes held membership. Elder William Thomas helped in the meeting, and every day for several weeks both ministers preached. William and Ebenezer attended the services and really wanted to understand and become Christians. But the testimonies of those who were Christians confused them. The boys could not feel that they had had any such cataclysmic experiences of grace in their hearts as so many claimed. During one service a pious lady approached William to urge him to action; he trembled at the sight of her and jumped out the window. Both preachers counseled with the boys who honestly wanted to do the right thing. But in an effort to analyze their own feelings and understand the miracle of conversion, they had become utterly confused.

Finally Ebenezer concluded, "My father has been an intelligent, consistent preacher for many years; he is the best friend I have on earth. I will trust God and follow the counsel of my father, and whatever I am made to believe is the will of God, I will do." After he went to bed he prayed for a long time for some evidence that he was converted and finally fell asleep. In the darkness of the night he believed that he saw a vision of the Saviour, a manifestation of the near and loving presence of Jesus.

The next morning the two brothers went to services, taking extra suits of clothes with them. They presented themselves for church membership and were baptized that same day by their father.

In the fall William went to Georgetown Baptist College in Kentucky. He had been given an opportunity to work for his expenses and he immediately took advantage of it. He was fortunate enough to remain until he graduated and then came back to Mississippi where he spent the rest of his life, part of the time teaching in Mississippi College and part of the time as pastor.

The winter after his conversion and baptism Ebenezer stayed at home and clerked in his father's store. Outwardly it was an uneventful and quiet winter, but inwardly the boy was torn by doubts and was deeply distressed about his spiritual condition. He heard other Christians talk about their feelings, and since his experience was not like theirs and he could neither weep nor rejoice as they did, he was becoming convinced that he must be mistaken and that he was, indeed, not a Christian at all. If he had only discussed the matter with somebody who understood he might have saved himself much needless suffering. It would have been so simple a matter to explain to him that trust in Jesus is the one essential thing, not trust in one's feelings; and that most Christians go through seasons of doubt and distress, when God seems not so near as at other times. But he was ashamed to confess his feelings. Finally, in desperation he sat down to write a letter to his church. While he was in the very act of writing bitter things against himself and asking that his name be dropped from the

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church roll since it was a sin for the unconverted to be church members, he received a notice that in church conference he had been "liberated to exercise his gifts" and they called upon him to commence to preach.

Still he hesitated, though preaching was the one thing that he wanted most to do. At the next conference the church passed an even stronger resolution, "In the judgment of the church it is the duty of the young brother E. L. Compere to exercise his gifts in the way of preaching, and we hereby call on him to commence such exercise at least in the bounds of our membership, and if he refuses this call, he must bear the responsibility of disregarding the wishes and judgment of his brethren." This was too much for him; it was like the voice of God, and he was afraid to disobey. So he recommitted himself to the Lord and began holding prayer meetings in private homes on Wednesday evenings and Sabbath afternoons. These meetings were sometimes in homes where the owners were not Christians and frequently, especially at first, there would be no one to lead in singing or in prayer but himself.

A. D. Phillips, a member of the same church, was just commencing his ministry in this way but in another neighborhood where he was teaching school. It was said that when these meetings began there was scarcely a man of the church who would lead in public prayer; but in three months' time they would, any of them, pray in their own homes and in church and were regular in attending the prayer meetings.

It was in the little town of Mooresville, Mississippi, in the winter of 1851 that these two young men preached their

first sermons. Joseph Moore, who had been preaching only about six months, was also there. Lee Compere, who was the pastor, sent the youthful preachers into the pulpit to conduct the entire service in their own way. Each man took his own text and preached his own sermon without reference to the other messages. Three prayers, three sermons, and as many songs, were all given in about one hour's time, and this when people were accustomed to church services lasting two or three hours. Joseph Moore preached about twenty minutes and each of the others ten minutes. Ebenezer's text was, "Faith without works is dead."

Brother James Davis, whose son, William H., was preparing for the ministry at Mercer University in Georgia, took a great interest in the education of these young men and at a meeting of the Aberdeen Association, of which Lee Compere was moderator, he made a motion that E. L. Compere and A. D. Phillips be recommended as beneficiaries of the ministerial aid fund of Mercer University, which motion was duly passed. B. M. Sanders, first president of Mercer and now chairman of the directors of the aid fund, wrote to Lee, "Send your son to us. Georgia Baptists feel that they owe you a debt and want to pay it in the education of your son."

These words from Dr. Sanders meant a great deal more to Lee than just that his son would have the opportunity to go on with his education, important as that was. When Lee was superintendent of Withington Station, Georgia Baptists had been highly displeased with the stand he had taken with reference to the disposition of the Creek land and in

the McIntosh affair. Many harsh words had been said. John C. Calhoun, then Secretary of War, had warmly commended Compere's policy and the Mission Board had endorsed the stand he had taken, but the Georgia associations, on the recommendation of Jesse Mercer and his committee, had withdrawn support of the mission several years before the Creeks were moved west of the Mississippi and the station closed. So these words of Dr. Sanders, coming as they did from a Georgia Baptist leader, did much to heal the hurt that still remained from that old disagreement.

But Ebenezer refused to go to school as a beneficiary of an aid fund. William was still at Georgetown working his way through college; and the younger brother felt that he ought to be able to do the same thing. Lee was much disturbed. He was now past sixty years old, his financial resources were small, and he saw no way in which he could help his son go to school. Neither did he believe that the boy was, himself, able to work for his living and carry a university course, for he had a naturally frail constitution and suffered constantly from poor eyesight. Lee reasoned with him that this offer of an education was plainly an opening of Providence and that if he refused it, it was because he had "a little too much pride and not enough faith." Reluctantly he consented, and in April, 1852, just two months after his nineteenth birthday, Ebenezer Lee Compere and A. D. Phillips, who was also a beneficiary of the ministerial aid fund, set out for Mercer University.

The venerable Dr. Sanders, known on the campus as "The

Old Master," and President Dagg received them cordially. They were given a room with S. W. Stephens, a ministerial student from the same county in Mississippi from which they had come; and since they had arrived in the middle of the term, they were put in special classes and their work directed by Professor Harris.

A "young men's sundown prayer meeting" was conducted by the students each evening that spring. Attendance was voluntary and the leaders were selected from one evening to the next from those who were taking part. The interest grew until a revival began throughout the student body and was continued by the faculty in the chapel services.

Ebenezer took an active part in these prayer meetings, but they brought him no joy. He was again beset by doubts about his spiritual condition and questioned whether he was actually called to preach. And then a friend came along such as he had needed for a long time.

Returning from a sundown prayer meeting one evening, William Davis, then a junior in the school, laid a hand on the boy's shoulder and said, "Compere, you are worried about something. Let's take a walk and tell me the trouble."

Davis' sympathetic understanding as he poured out his doubts and distress was worth everything. Davis confessed that he himself had had similar experiences, had even, like Compere, been on the point of giving up and going home; but Dr. Dagg had talked with him and helped him to a better understanding. Relieved and encouraged, Ebenezer gave up the idea of going back home and settled

down to his work with a lighter heart than he had had in many months.

When the summer vacation came, Ebenezer decided to visit some of his stepmother's relatives in Wilkes County, Georgia. He had no idea of being known as a preacher, but when he attended the country church where his hosts worshiped, the pastor said to him, "My young brother, don't you exercise in public?" meaning, as Ebenezer readily understood, "Don't you preach?"

"Not much," replied the frightened young theologian.

"Well, you will preach today. Come, walk up into the pulpit. It is time to commence."

"But I have not thought of such a thing. It would be wrong for me to try. Just let me sit here."

"The brethren will be hurt if you refuse. Come, we will pray for you and the Lord will help you."

There was no resisting the old pastor, so the young ministerial student "exercised."

This was the beginning of a strenuous summer, for Ebenezer was called on to "exercise his gift" nearly every day of the entire three months' vacation. He was glad when it was over, for it had been far harder work than studying at Mercer.

During the winter vacation he sold books for the American Tract Society and received eighteen dollars for six weeks' work. He had arrived at Mercer with seventeen dollars in his pocket, for his remuneration for preaching during the summer had been meager. The ministerial aid

fund paid his board and tuition, but clothes and incidental expenses he must furnish for himself. He was beginning to feel that he looked quite shabby; he did his own mending except when he could write a composition or work a problem for a fellow student in exchange for this sort of needlework which he detested.

This financial crisis was relieved by the Aberdeen Association. In their annual meeting Miss Ann Dowd suggested, through Brother Eager, for being a true Southern lady she would not have dared lift her own voice in so august an assembly, that the Association send "Brother Compere's son fifty dollars to help him go on to school." The money came at a most opportune time and greatly relieved the situation.

Missionary-minded Baptists in Mississippi had been anxious for a long time to have a school of their own. As early as 1835, before there was a state convention, a Mississippi Baptist Education Society had been organized of which Lee Compere was the first president. Among other things this society had worked for a school of college grade to be owned and directed by the Baptists. Finally the college at Clinton came into their hands, and George S. Granberry was graduated there in 1853, the first alumnus after the school came under Baptist control. The next fall Ebenezer Compere entered and there graduated in 1857. He became pastor of three country churches and continued his studies in Mississippi College, eventually receiving the Master's Degree in 1860.

In the summer of 1858 Ebenezer was granted a leave of absence from his churches and spent a long vacation with

his brother, Thomas Hichichee, in Arkansas. In 1854, a son had been born to Thomas Hichichee and Eliza and they had named him for Ebenezer; to make the acquaintance of his little four-year-old namesake was one of the joys of this visit.

Soon after coming to this border state, Thomas Hichichee had been ordained to the full gospel ministry at El Dorado. His material remuneration had been small, but he had been greatly blessed in his work. In 1856 he had written to his father, "I believe that God is with me. My home is a happy place, Eliza is a good wife. If all your sons should be blessed with good wives, a clear conscience and the real enjoyment of religion, they will be happy men."

Ebenezer enjoyed his visit, but he was shocked at the humble cabin in which his brother's family lived. When he reproached Hichichee for living where he had to keep his family in poverty, he had replied that somebody had to be willing to work on the frontier and that Eliza did not complain; his family had plenty to eat and to wear and he believed God would ever give them as much as they needed, if he gave his life to Christ and the defense of the truth. Ebenezer had no answer to such faith. When he went back to Mississippi he was haunted by what he had seen, the spiritual destitution, the few preachers, the rapidly growing communities where there were no churches. And after his second graduation in 1860, like his brother, and like their parents before them, he turned his face, too, towards the West.

CHAPTER IV

ACROSS THE MISSISSIPPI

As early as 1840 there was a growing spirit of division between the Baptists of the North and the South over the slavery question. In 1843 in Boston a Free Mission Society was organized in opposition to the Mission Board of the Triennial Convention because there were those who felt that they could not co-operate in missionary activity with people who advocated slavery.

In April, 1845, the Home Mission Society, meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, adopted resolutions to the effect that "In our opinion it is expedient that the members now forming the Society, should hereafter act in separate organizations at the South and at the North, in promoting the objects which were originally contemplated by the Society." They further resolved that a committee be appointed to work out a plan for effecting this separation in such a way as to respect the rights of all the members and with the least possible interruption of missionary activity.

Since the days of Paul and Barnabas, whose opposing views about John Mark's fitness for missionary service resulted in two missionary parties instead of one, God has on occasion used the weakness and error of man to praise Him. In this division of Northern and Southern Baptists, the work was multiplied. After the separation, the work continued that had already been begun and was supported by Northern Baptists; while Southern Baptists, through

their own Board of Domestic Missions and Indian Missions, gave in the next thirteen years, not thirty-eight thousand as they had in the previous thirteen years, but more than two hundred and sixty-six thousand dollars.

At the meeting called for organization of Southern Baptists in Augusta, Georgia, May 12, 1845, provision was made for a Foreign Mission Board, to be located at Richmond, Virginia; and a Board of Domestic Missions, with headquarters in Marion, Alabama. It was recommended that special attention of the churches be directed to the Indian Mission Association, which was located at Louisville, Kentucky, and that it be supported with "zeal and liberality."

The responsibility of Southern Baptists for "the religious instruction of our colored population" was stressed and it was recommended that the new Board of Domestic Missions take "all prudent measures" to fulfill this obligation. New Orleans, referred to in a later report as "the great emporium of the South," was cited as a place greatly in need of Baptist missionaries; and it was further recommended to the Board "to direct its effective attention to aid the present effort to establish the Baptist cause in that city." Basil Manly was elected president of the Board, and J. L. Reynolds, corresponding secretary.

When Southern Baptists met again, in 1846, at Richmond, Virginia, the Board of Domestic Missions could not report much progress. The officers first elected had been able to give little time to the work, and they had been unable to secure a corresponding secretary until the year was half gone. There were six missionaries under

appointment and new work was recommended to be begun in the Mississippi Valley; at key locations in Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, and Florida; especial attention being given to the Rio Grande Valley where so large a part of the population was Mexican and that a missionary should be located at Brownsville, Texas, at once. At this meeting Brother Jesse Hartwell was elected president of the Board and Brother R. Holman, corresponding secretary.

It is interesting to note that at this 1846 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, Brother T. Simons of Burmah, who had rendered such acceptable service many years before at Withington Station, was among the visitors and it was voted, "that Brother T. Simons be cordially invited to a seat with us and the president requested to extend to him the hand of fellowship and Christian affection."

As the new Convention became better organized, there were changes in work and responsibilities. In 1855 the Board of Domestic Missions had added to it the Indian Missionary Association; later, publications and fostering of Sunday schools were under its direction; in 1873 it was known as the Domestic and Indian Mission and Sunday School Board. This was too much name for any organization. The next year it was changed to the Home Mission Board and this name it has kept through the years, though its responsibilities have varied from time to time.

In 1848 the Henry F. Buckners were sent out as missionaries to the Creek Indians in the Indian territory. The work was difficult and they were called on to endure

all sorts of privations and persecutions. When Brother Buckner told about his labors to Southern Baptists, their hearts were touched, but too often they allowed their sympathy to find expression in tears as they listened to his earnest pleas; and then Brother Buckner was permitted to continue without a decent house to live in and with inadequate support. Lee Compere wanted to join him in the work, but he was nearly sixty years old and had suffered for some time with a heart ailment; and his wife, "though one of the best of wives and stepmother, and an humble, earnest Christian, had such a dread of the Indians on account of their cruelties to white people, that he could not get her consent to live among them."

At a meeting of the Mississippi Baptist State Convention in 1859, M. T. Sumner, then secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions, led a discussion on the Indian work in which he said that the need was "men, not money." A brother called on Ebenezer Compere, who was still a student at Mississippi College, to speak. "With much emotion he told of his desire to preach to the Indians, and asked the Convention to pray that the great guiding hand might lead him in the right direction."

Another call had come to the young preacher through his friend, A. D. Phillips. They had preached their first sermons in the same service; they had been sent together from the same association in Mississippi to Mercer where they had been roommates. When Phillips went to Africa in 1855, Ebenezer wrote asking him all sorts of questions. How did he live? What food did he eat. What was the nature of his work? Was he satisfied in it? What sort of

man could best carry on the missionary work in Nigeria?

To all these questions, Phillips, in August of 1856, wrote detailed answers. When he came to the last one he said, "a man with a good, firm nervous system, rather lean with good and prominent sinews, the veins showing full and large on his hands and arms, flesh firm, and he having intrepid courage, though not enough to render him excitable or nervous."

Ebenezer must have recognized this as a description of himself as he appeared to his friend, for Phillips continued, "Oh, my dear Ebb, do not let trifles keep you back. Why should we fear to come to this climate, seeing it is the same Almighty Protector here that there is there. I will leave that matter with you and your God, and, in the meantime, pray for you to be given to the African mission."

When Ebenezer received his Master's degree from Mississippi College in 1860, he was offered a professorship that was much to his liking. His churches were prospering and provided him with a good living. For a while he had been agent for the *Mississippi Baptist*, the denominational paper of the state, and besides working for subscriptions he had also written numbers of articles for it. He was impressed with the need for religious literature and the service that could be rendered through Baptist papers to promote the work.

Which way should he go? To teach? To writing and the interests of the paper? To the Indians and the work his mother and father had loved so much? To Africa? To his Mississippi churches? Or back to that haunting

borderland of spiritual destitution in western Arkansas and the Indian territory? After serious consideration and prayer, he came to the definite conviction that, for him, God pointed to the West and to the West he determined to go. Thirty-five years later, not long before his death, he wrote, "I believe that God sent me to this field, has required me to remain here, is with me now; and that no evil proposed against me will prosper. . . . This is a most important field and should interest all who love Home Missions."

An appeal was made to Dr. M. T. Sumner, the secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions, for funds to begin this new work on the border. But the Board was in no position to begin new work. They offered to support Compere in the Indian territory if he would go to work with Brother Buckner. This he felt that he could not do; and he was making plans to go to Fort Smith, Arkansas, without a dollar of support in sight. He expected, if nothing else opened up, to teach school for a living. At this point Brother George Whitfield came to the rescue. Said he, "Compere, what will you do in Arkansas for a living?"

"Teach."

"But I do not want you to teach. What will it take to support you?"

"I told Dr. Sumner," Compere replied, "that I would accept half of what my churches have been paying me."

"And what have they been paying you?"

"A thousand dollars."

"Then, if you will give your full time to preaching for five hundred dollars, my father, brother Theodore, and

myself will pay it," promised George Whitfield. And so they did, until the work was well established and support could be obtained from other sources.

In June, 1860, Brother Whitfield wrote, "I cannot promise certainly to visit Fort Smith this summer but I would like to do so . . . How can I best get there? I hope and trust that your efforts will be owned of God and prove effectual, though we do not see the fruit immediately. Let us be but faithful to our work, Brother Compere, and the Lord will own us. Pray for me that I may do so. I will send some more money soon. Farewell — Affectionately and yours truly, George Whitfield."

Ebenezer had arrived in Fort Smith at night, early in the year of 1860. He found a typical frontier town with a saloon on every corner, few schools, and fewer churches; the Indians under the influence of the worst type of white men who had come from the ends of the earth in their search for adventure. There were others who were primarily interested in building homes and creating a fit community in which to bring up their families. A struggling little Baptist church had been organized in December of 1857 by Brother D. Buckley, who had been the first pastor. In March of 1860 this church, consisting of two men and a few very poor women, called the new missionary as pastor. He proclaimed it "the church for the poor" and soon he was preaching to ever-increasing congregations. He gave half his time to Fort Smith and one fourth to Dardanelle, eighty miles away, where his brother, Thomas Hichichee, had once been pastor. The rest of the time he spent in various places where churches had not

yet been organized. Before the year was out the Convention of Northwest Georgia had offered him six hundred dollars to give half his time to work among the Cherokees in the Indian territory. This he accepted on condition that he be allowed to continue to give half time to the church of Fort Smith. This arrangement continued until the War Between the States put an end to all missionary work for the time being.

At Fort Smith the Baptists secured a piece of property and erected a church house at a cost of eight hundred dollars and had it paid for in three months. As soon as the building was ready for use a meeting was held lasting nineteen nights, which was largely attended. The records say that during Compere's pastorate there were one hundred twenty-four additions, sixty-four by baptism.

In October of 1860 the young missionary-pastor attended the Arkansas Baptist State Convention at Pine Bluff and invited the next session to meet with his church at Fort Smith. This invitation was accepted and the last session of the state convention before the war was held there in 1861.

The work among the Cherokees was hardly so encouraging as that with the Baptists of the border but there was some response and Ebenezer came to be good friends with many of them. The war, which brought division among the white people, also divided the Indians. One faction under Chief John Ross favored the Union; the other under Stand Watie, the Confederacy. Ebenezer enlisted as a chaplain under Stand Watie and served with him throughout the war.

It was while he was on furlough back in Mississippi that in company with John Hamberlin, a preacher friend and former college-mate, he went calling in the home of Mrs. William Mullins, widow of a Baptist preacher. According to tradition, it was Hamberlin who suggested the call. Said he, "Ebb, I am going to see Miss Sallie Mullins, old Brother William Mullins's daughter. She has a pretty little black-eyed sister, Josephine. How would you like to go with me?"

The Mullins girls had gone to school at their uncle's Yolobusha Female Institute at Grenada. Until the war had changed everything, they had lived happy, carefree lives, sheltered and protected, as was proper for well-bred Southern girls. Their father, William Mullins, had been a Baptist preacher but he was also a plantation owner and had slaves. Sallie greatly admired John Hamberlin. He was much older than she, having graduated at Mississippi College in 1856 with the highest honors, and since been president of a girl's school. His first wife had died, leaving a small son. Little Allie, Sallie's sister, watched the romance develop and was thrilled. She thought it would be wonderful to marry a preacher! But Josephine Isabella had other ideas. Indeed not! She had been a preacher's daughter all her life, with its attendant restrictions. No preacher husband for her! And then Ebenezer came to call. It was not many weeks before she had changed her mind and come to a different conclusion. Plans were made for a triple wedding. The three bridegrooms were soldiers, two of them chaplains; the three brides, Sallie and Josephine Mullins, and their cousin Sallie Granberry.

As the thirteenth of December, the day set for the weddings, approached it began to look like war and weather would completely upset the plans. It was necessary for Ebenezer to cross the Mississippi River which was at flood stage. He made three attempts; two mules were drowned under him and he had to swim the last few hundred yards through swift, muddy water before he reached the Mississippi side. John Hamberlin was unable to obtain his furlough and so his wedding to Sallie Mullins took place some weeks later. But Josephine Isabella Mullins and Chaplain Compere, and Sallie Granberry and Captain Hairgraves, were married December 13, 1863. Both the brides and the bridegrooms wore homespun clothes. S. G. Mullins, brother of Josephine, performed one ceremony and his brother-in-law, Ed Freeman, performed the other; altogether quite a family affair.

Ebenezer went back to his chaplaincy where he had found as much work to do as in his borderland mission field. A great revival was sweeping through the army and there were not chaplains enough to meet the need. One of them wrote to him from a camp near Monticello, Arkansas, in 1864, "It seems that you have had greatly exaggerated reports of my success. I have not baptized three or four hundred, though that number of professions have been made recently in this division. Upon my arrival here I began to preach daily, assisted by young Smith . . . We continued our labors forty-five days . . . We were compelled to rest for we were well-nigh exhausted . . . The interest was unabated. We baptized one hundred and forty-six . . . We have not one army Hymn Book, no tracts and

few Testaments; nor do I know of any command in the Trans-Mississippi District better supplied than we. If you, of your abundance, can spare some of these books, I will go to any point to procure them."

This letter was published in the *Louisiana Baptist*, September 14, 1864, and editorial space was given to Ebenezer for a strong plea to the "Trans-Mississippi Preachers." He begged them to leave their "lukewarm, worldly-minded, very small congregations, where during the three years of the war you have perhaps not baptized so many; and come into the army where a white harvest is waiting to be reaped . . . Brethren, why stand ye here comparatively idle while the necessities of the army call you so loudly, while the work there is 'compelled' to cease because the laborers are not sufficient to carry it forward."

Southern Baptists were not slow to contribute to this work and the Domestic Board of Missions received from April, 1863, to April, 1864, one hundred and thirty thousand dollars for army missions. Unfortunately this was Confederate money and did not amount to so much as one might think at first reading. However, the Board was able to say in its report, "Our Domestic Mission Board, aided by Bible and colportage societies, is accomplishing a great work throughout the bounds of its legitimate fields. Its attention is chiefly directed to the Army."

When the war was over, Ebenezer returned to Josephine's home in Mississippi where he found things in a most deplorable state. Many of the freed Negroes were gone; Mrs. Mullins had nobody to superintend the farm work; the destitution that had followed in the wake of the

war was to be seen on every hand. Immediately he set to work on the farm and that year made a good corn crop. This was enough to tide them over the first difficult period of postwar readjustment, which meant farming without slave labor.

In September, 1865, their first child was born to Ebenezer and Josephine, a son, to whom was given the name William Lee for his two preacher grandfathers, William Mullins and Lee Compere.

But Lee Compere was not in Mississippi to welcome this latest grandson. Before the war he had been irresistibly drawn by the call of the western frontier and despite his age and the rheumatic condition of his heart, with his wife and youngest daughter, he had joined Thomas Hichichee in Arkansas. Still later they had all moved on together to Texas. Lee and his family settled first in east Texas; Thomas Hichichee took his family to Navarro County near Corsicana. Aunt Jane had remained in Mississippi where she made her home with William S. Compere until her death. William had married Louisa Gabrilla Stephens and made his home first at Clinton where he taught in Mississippi College. He seems not to have had the inner urge to move on that characterized so many members of his family but spent all the years of his active ministry in the state of Mississippi.

Ebenezer could not forget his churches in Fort Smith and along the border, so when conditions on Mrs. Mullins's farm were better and the work could be left in capable hands, he again applied to the Board at Marion, Alabama, to be sent back to Arkansas. But again the Board of Do-

mestic Missions was in financial distress and could not send him. Still feeling deeply the call to return, he began preparation to take his young wife and baby to Fort Smith, Arkansas, at his own expense. He had several hundred dollars from the crop he had made; and he bought a stock of drugs, thinking to obtain some income from their sale, as well as furnish a real service to many people who were far removed from drug stores, or, for that matter, from any stores at all.

Early in March, 1866, Ebenezer and Josephine with their four-months-old son set out for the West. Arriving in Memphis, Tennessee, on Friday evening, they decided to spend the weekend there rather than travel on Sunday. Sunday evening, leaving his wife and baby at the hotel, Ebenezer walked perhaps a mile to attend services at the old First Church. He was walking up the steps of the church, thinking himself a complete stranger and expecting to worship with the Lord's people entirely unnoticed. Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder and somebody said, "Compere, what are you doing here?"

It was Dr. M. T. Sumner of the Board of Domestic Missions. They fell into a discussion of the mission work along the border and Dr. Sumner asked the young missionary how he expected to support himself. The result of this meeting and conversation was that Dr. Sumner promised Compere five hundred dollars towards his support, "which," he said, "I will pay whether the Board votes it or not."

"Good," said Compere, "I was George Whitfield's missionary before the war and I had just as soon be the missionary of Martin T. Sumner."

Writing of this experience at a later date, Ebenezer said, "thus God's hand was manifest again. And this deliverance was at the threshold of God's house on the blessed night of the Lord's Day. Suppose to save a hotel bill I had started Saturday?"

A week later, on March 17, they reached Fort Smith and were received in Brother Mayfield's home and "on the following Tuesday," Ebenezer wrote in his journal, "we moved into Sister Buckley's little office. On the 22nd we planted three rows of Irish potatoes and bedded a part of a peck of sweet potatoes. On the 24th we planted cabbage, kale, mustard, radishes, beets and onions in new ground. We planted on the 29th some early corn, on 30th some beans, pepper, okra, lettuce, turnips, tomatoes and more Irish potatoes and mustard and some melons, also on the 31st some butter beans and cucumbers. April 26, planted some corn and beans, radishes and beets." This extensive garden no doubt explains how they were able to live on such a small income year after year; this and Josephine's clever, thrifty way of turning every material thing, however small, to some advantage.

Dr. Sumner was as good as his word and on March 21 he wrote from Marion, Alabama, "Enclosed please find your commission. I dated it from January 1, 1866. Send your report to April 1, 1866, and receive your quarter's salary. How shall I send it? Give directions. Write me the condition of affairs as you find it from time to time. I hope you had a safe trip. The Board cheerfully made this appropriation, and may your labors be greatly blessed."

This commission is issued to "the Reverend E. L. Compere by the Board of Managers for Domestic Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention . . . to preach the Gospel in Fort Smith and vicinity for the term of 12 months from this date, to receive a salary of five hundred dollars from the said Board, or at that rate per annum. The remainder of your support to be furnished on your field." It is signed by William McIntosh, president, and M. T. Sumner, corresponding secretary.

On March 25th Ebenezer preached his first sermon after a three years' absence from his field, at Charleston, on "The Lord's Prayer." Thus began a period of mission work in a field that extended as far east as Little Rock and west into the Indian territory, preaching not only to the white people but often to colored congregations and to the Indians.

In August the Comperes moved out of "Sister Buckley's office" and into their own home on Grand Prairie. They set out fruit trees and late in the fall planted potatoes. This new home was a log cabin fourteen feet square without even a chimney. It was built in such a manner that one night in a storm it shook until they left it and went out on the prairie, where for three hours a drenching rain fell and the wind almost carried them off.

When Ebenezer wrote about the situation, he said, "I was very happy in this work. And nothing strengthened me more than the fact that my wife never complained. She had been delicately reared; never having washed a garment, milked a cow or cooked but one meal in her life, before she came with me to Arkansas. But she at once

assumed these domestic duties, and walked five miles with me every Sabbath, going and returning from my appointment."

"At the end of four months, we held a meeting of days, and God graciously poured out the Spirit. Many were converted. And I baptized twenty of them with my left hand, a pony having kicked and broken a bone in my right wrist."

The records for 1866 show that he preached in Little Rock on one occasion and many times at Charleston, Greenwood, Fellowship Church, Cane Creek, Grand Prairie, and other places in Arkansas and the Indian Territory. At Fort Smith he had found that the Negroes had taken over the church building during his absence and it was necessary to secure a new location and begin all over again. They held services in a schoolhouse until another lot could be bought and a church building erected.

Early in 1867 the Comperes were again living in Fort Smith and Ebenezer wrote that he soon expected his father, Lee Compere, then seventy-seven years old, to make his home with them. He requested, through the Baptist papers, that Lee's old friends should write to him at Fort Smith, saying, "Of late years he has been almost helpless, frequently suffering the most excruciating pain, from neuralgia of the heart . . . No man loves his friends better than my father . . . Letters from them would be to him as "water in a thirsty land."

But Lee was never able to make the trip back to Arkansas and spent the last years of his life with his oldest son, Thomas Hichichee, in Texas. He became more and more

feeble but his mind remained clear and his interest in people unabated. The two youngest children of Thomas Hichichee, Cogee and Eddie, were quite small at the time and he was especially fond of them, calling them his "little pets." When the neighbors brought in special dainties for him, he had them carefully set aside and when the neighbors were gone, he gave the treats to his little grandchildren.

One morning the children were barred from the room where their grandfather slept. They sensed that something unusual was taking place, and, watching her chances, Cogee slipped into the room where he was. The old man was dying. Strangely enough, some of the neighbors who had come in made room for the little girl near his bed and then somebody picked her up and set her on the footboard of his bed, where she sat until Lee Compere had breathed his last. When this little girl, who became Mrs. J. H. Couch of San Antonio, Texas, was herself a great-grandmother, she said, "I have always been glad that I was allowed to do such a strange thing, for my grandfather's face was triumphant and it gave me a conception of death that has been a source of comfort all my life."

The report of Lee Compere's death, June 15, 1871, was published not only in the American papers but the *Freeman* of England carried an account that brought the following letter to Ebenezer from John Clark, the next oldest missionary in Jamaica, which was published in the *Home and Foreign Journal* of February, 1872. Said Mr. Clark, "I have had the particulars put in *The Queen's Newsman*, Kingston, as very many will feel interested in hearing of

one whose memory is held very dear. In 1869 I published 'Memorials of Baptist Missionaries in Jamaica.' Two and a half pages refer to your father; he stands second on a list of 70 European and 30 native ministers, who have labored or who still labor in Jamaica or West Africa." Fifty-six years it had been since Lee and Susannah Compere had spent a brief while in Jamaica, and yet the work and the workers were remembered.

From England to Jamaica and on to America they had come, the westward way leading them on from South Carolina, through Georgia, Alabama, into Mississippi, Tennessee; and then across the Mississippi River Lee had come to Arkansas and then to Texas. Across more than half a century of time, across an ocean and half a continent of space, consistently he had brought a message of the love of God to all men, regardless of race or color or condition. At the time of his death his three sons were all actively engaged in the ministry, two of his daughters had married Baptist preachers; all seven of his children were useful members of Baptist churches, having part in the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Lee Compere was described as "a man of quiet unassuming dignity, urbane and deferring to others, yet conscious of his own abilities . . . In sentiment and in practice he was a whole-souled 'Missionary.' In holy things he never indulged in lightness, yet he was a most pleasant and affectionate fireside companion, possessed of a smiling, pleasant countenance, with eyes whose expression was full of kind feeling . . . With the lowly and unlettered he was unpretending, and yet, without straining he showed

himself the peer of the most pretentious, without seeming effort commanding the respect of the highest and most distinguished."

Ebenezer, youngest of the nine children of Lee and Susannah, wrote of his father, "He ever held to regular baptism, restricted communion, and a strictly Baptist pulpit. But the steady, Christian life, the meek, prayerful, forgiving, forbearing spirit, he regarded as far more important than mere regularity."

By the time of Lee Compere's death, Ebenezer and Josephine were living at Charleston, Arkansas, and were still giving part of their time to the work of the Home Mission Board, with special attention to the Indian work among the Cherokees and Choctaws. As far back as 1855, when the Board of Domestic Missions took over the work previously fostered by the Indian Mission Association, work had been carried on among these tribes.

Peter Folsom, a Choctaw chief who had been converted to Christianity and made a most effective missionary to his own people, had written to the Board, "I would be truly glad if you would send us one smart, good, old missionary to locate himself among us, for we need one very much." The Board had not always been able to provide the "smart, good, old missionary" that the Indian requested but whenever men and money were available, work among the Indians, especially the Creeks, Cherokees and Choctaws, had been promoted.

The reports show that in 1867-68, Compere gave half his time to the Home Mission Board and half to churches in Arkansas. In 1869 he reports full time given to the

Board with fifty-six baptisms for the year. In December of that year he received a letter from Dr. Sumner which said, "Enclosed please find Commission as General Agent and Evangelist for Arkansas and the Indian Territory. Now, my dear Brother, go to work in good earnest and let us see what you can do. I like your idea—you are free—no excuse—and may God bless you and guide. I wish you would visit the Territory again and give me definite information in all particulars, you can give it in a letter to the 'Journal', if you please. Let me hear from you often. I will send you the balance due on this year soon."

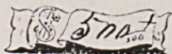
The Home Mission Board report for 1870 says that "E. L. Compere was authorized in January to extend his services in the Indian Territory, and render all possible assistance to the mission, particularly in the Choctaw and Cherokee nations." In 1871 he again gave half his time to Fort Smith and Charleston and reported to the Board only twenty-six weeks of service. The following year he worked seventeen weeks, this service being with the Cherokee nation, traveled 800 miles and baptized fifteen, besides sixteen baptized by others in connection with his efforts.

Dr. Sumner was anxious for the work among the Cherokees and wrote in October of 1871, planning for the next year's work, to ask Compere to give full time and move his family to the Cherokee nation in the territory. One may only speculate as why this offer was turned down. The salary had been increased to twelve hundred dollars; but the same letter that carried the request to give all his time said that a check was enclosed for one hundred dollars "which please place to our credit on your salary in 1870."

Just how the missionary family had lived in 1871 with the 1870 salary still unpaid is not explained; but this could be one reason why the Comperes did not move to the Cherokee nation. Or perhaps Josephine could not see her way clear to take her little children to such an environment; there were already four of them and the two older ones, William Lee and his little sister Sallie Voysey, were old enough to be in school. Or more probably, Ebenezer still felt that his call to service was primarily to the white people of the border rather than to the Indians. At any rate, he continued to live at Charleston, Arkansas, and gave only part of his time to the work of the Board.

In 1873 the Board re-stated its responsibilities, "The work of this Board is to aid feeble churches; to organize and sustain Sunday Schools; and to occupy and cultivate promising and inviting fields which are opening to us in every direction." It was also voted by the Convention "that the Sunday School Board of this Convention be consolidated with the Domestic and Indian Mission Board. That year Compere reported thirty weeks' service, fifty-nine sermons and addresses, baptisms, fifteen, baptisms by others in connection with his work, six. A. D. Phillips, Ebenezer's good friend from Africa, had returned to America because of ill health and was employed by the Home Mission Board that year as its general agent in Alabama; and Matthew Lyon, Compere's brother-in-law, was the Home Board's missionary in central Mississippi.

In one of Ebenezer's accounts of this period of service with the Home Mission Board, he tells of the first agreement to pay him five hundred dollars, then he says, "The



Commission,

No 46

Office of the Board for Domestic Missions of the S. B. C.

MARION, PERRY COUNTY, ALA

Jan, 17, 1866

To the Rev. E. L. Compere,

Believing, on reliable information, that the friends of true religion in *Arkansas*

are not able to sustain the ministry of the Word; and that the prospects of success in establishing the cause of Christ there, are sufficient to encourage the effort; and reposing confidence in you as a Minister of the Gospel in good standing; and an application being duly made, accompanied by the requisite recommendations, the Board of Managers for Domestic Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention, do, by these Presents, appoint you their Missionary, to preach the Gospel in

Fort Smith Locality,

for the term

12

months from this date, to receive for salary

Five

Dollars Dollars from the said Board, or at that rate per annum. The remainder of your support to be furnished on your field.

The terms of this Commission are as follows, (unless special exceptions are made,) viz:

1. That you possess credentials as a Minister of the Gospel, of regular standing in the Baptist denomination.
2. That you render to our Corresponding Secretary at the end of EACH QUARTER, a succinct report of your labors as directed in the annexed "Instructions"; and that you conform, as far as possible, to these instructions, and such others as may be furnished you from time to time.
3. That you do not enter into the service of, or receive additional aid from any other Missionary Body or Society during your connection with us, without special arrangement with us to that effect.
4. That you report to our Board all the contributions made, through you, to the funds of said Board.
5. The sum stipulated in this Commission will be paid, as may suit your location best, either in current money, or drafts drawn, by order of the Board, on our Treasurer, or some other responsible person, made payable to yourself or order, in annual, semi-annual, or quarterly payments, as you desire:—but in no case will money or drafts be forwarded until you shall have reported labor as required by your Commission and "instructions," and you shall have requested the same in your reports.

By order of the Board.

Wm. M. Bates.....resident.

W. J. Sumner.....Corresponding Secretary.

Commission from the Board of Domestic Missions Appointing
E. L. Compere a Missionary.

Board of Domestic and Indian Missions, S. B. C.

Rev. W. H. McINTOSH, President.

Rev. M. T. SUMNER, Cor. Secretary.

J. B. LOVELAKE, Esq., Treasurer.

Macon, Ga., Mch, 21, 1866.

Rev. Ed. Campere.

Fort Smith, Ark.

My dear Bro.

Enclosed please find your commission. I dated your Com. from Jan. 1st 1866. I will send you report to April 1st 1866 & receive your quarterly salary. Now shall I send it. Give directions. Write me the condition of affairs as you find it from time to time. I hope you had a safe trip. The Board cheerfully make the appropriation, & may your labor, be greatly blessed, Yours truly,

M. T. Sumner.

Cor. Sec.

I can send you checks, or to J. J. if they will answer your purpose.
S.

Letter from Dr. Sumner Advising Compere of His Appointment.

next year my salary was six hundred; then eight hundred and then twelve hundred; and then *none* for Adam-like, I obeyed my wife and disobeyed the Board. But she was right, as the passing years proved." During the next ten years the Comperes were actively engaged in educational work and Ebenezer was pastor of several churches in western Arkansas, but it was not until 1884 that he was again employed by the Home Mission Board.

CHAPTER V

PRESSING FORWARD

The borderland of the new state of Arkansas and the Indian territory was typical frontier, peopled by traders, adventurers, Indians, federal officers; some real estate agents, merchants, homesteaders; a few professional men, teachers, lawyers, preachers and doctors. Their reasons for being in such a place varied from the lawbreaker who fled some older, more settled community to escape the penalty of his misdeeds; to the missionary whose heart yearned over the spiritual destitution of the people and who longed to build Christian communities in the West. To create a fit cultural and religious atmosphere, to solve the day-by-day problems of food and clothes, was enough to challenge the skill and ingenuity as well as the courage of any homemaker.

Very few items could be purchased. Such things as coffee, sugar, and flour were bought in quantities, as means and opportunity would allow. Hogs and cattle provided meat and lard. Ebenezer's "Garden and Farm Journal" shows that wherever they stopped to make a home, no matter how brief the stay, they planted an extensive garden and put out fruit trees. When one recalls how bare and crude some of the houses were in which they lived at various times, it makes the heart glad to read that they also put out **rose cuttings and planted flowers**. The home in the little cabin on Grand Prairie was scantily furnished but it was not without beauty or comfort.

Josephine Mullins had had no experience in cooking a meal or washing a garment; but war conditions, when no manufactured goods from the northern or European markets could be secured, had made it necessary for the women of her family to become experts in weaving, knitting, dressmaking, and even tailoring. So now Josephine Mullins Compere, wife of a frontier missionary, applied her keen mind and capable hands to making the best of the situation. She knitted the socks and stockings that her family wore and tailored Ebenezer's suits. These suits were sometimes made of homespun but they fitted well; and Mrs. Compere was not ashamed of the appearance her husband made when he started to a preaching appointment or on a missionary tour into the Indian territory. She also made all the clothes her children wore; and when one recalls that the sewing machine did not come into general use until several years after the frontier home was established, one wonders how she could have accomplished so much.

When a sewing machine could be had, one was secured for the Comperes and right well did it serve its purpose. When Josephine's children were grown and had established homes of their own, she gave the machine to a daughter-in-law who had married one of her preacher sons. It was used then not only to make clothes for another missionary family but the little girls learned their letters from the words on its frame-work, and as soon as they were tall enough to reach the treadle and the presserfoot at the same time, began making doll dresses on it. Still later it went with them to Africa where it finished out its existence in Obgomoso making shirts and "shokotoes" for African mission boys. What a sewing machine!

With clothing so difficult to secure, one can well understand how gratefully missionary boxes were received. They not only helped to stretch the missionary's salary but they often contained things that were not easily obtained from the frontier stores and trading posts and relieved the strain on the missionary wife and mother. Long before Woman's Missionary Union was organized in 1888, individual societies over the South sent out many of these barrels and boxes. Sometimes they were a disappointment when the things were unsuitable or shabby; but as a general rule they were a real help.

Perhaps the most elaborate box the Comperes ever received came from the Lee Street Baptist Church, which is now the Lee Street Memorial, of Baltimore. Early in the summer the president of the missionary society had written for the names, ages, and exact measurements of each member of the family. For three months they worked, keeping the matter a secret from their young pastor, Dr. E. Y. Mullins, who was Mrs. Compere's nephew, and who was later to become president of the Southern Baptist Seminary, and still later president of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance. When everything was ready, they invited Dr. and Mrs. Mullins to come see the results of their summer's work. Misses Annie and Alice Armstrong came to help with the packing and even Miss Fannie Heck, then president of Southern Woman's Missionary Union, came from North Carolina, and had a hand in it.

Mrs. Mullins wrote in detail to their missionary relatives about the people who had made each gift and about

the packing of the box. "You can imagine," she wrote, "all the loving, happy thoughts we had over each garment. We called Mrs. Compere 'the bride' and gave her clothes all the happy interest bridal things usually have. Then we knew each one of you by name, 'there are Sallie's,' 'these are Jennie's.' I only wish you might have looked on to see how gladly the work was done."

As a matter of fact, this box was received in November of 1892 and was somewhat late to contain a trousseau for Josephine, for by that time she was the mother of nine, seven of whom were living. The youngest, Jack and Susie, were twins, then nearly thirteen years old. However, her wartime trousseau must have been rather meager and perhaps after all these years this one made up for it. A woman always appreciates pretty clothes and a box full of new stylish garments, complete outfits for father, mother, four sons, and three daughters, was an event, indeed.

There were also things for the house included in the box, one of them a beautifully embroidered quilt of dark red wool bound in satin that came to be known in the family as "the red quilt" and is in the possession of a granddaughter to this day.

So by various means, the material needs of the family were met. Tradition has it that while Ebenezer was busily engaged in missionary activity that Josephine gave her entire time and attention to her family. This must have been especially true in the early years when the children were small and when her own strength was often not equal to the tasks in hand. In that first journal that Ebenezer kept he has to record more than once, "My wife is sick."

In midwinter of 1867 he wrote, "My family is unwell and the roads and weather bad." In the December 1869 *Home and Foreign Journal*, there is a note that "Sister E. L. Compere has been ill for forty-three days, not able to sit up more than a few minutes each day." Ebenezer wrote to one of their sons when he was away at college, "Your mother is quite sick . . . This is the fourth time I have carried her through painful and fearful attacks. I am thankful that a Kind Providence put me at home so I could treat her." He really believed then that she was too frail to live much longer and so wrote to their son. As a matter of fact, she outlived him by forty-two years and reached the advanced age of ninety-three.

Josephine was a woman of few words. Her husband, in an account of their early years in the West, expressed his gratitude because she never complained of any hardship. In a letter to one of their sons he wrote, "You cannot love her too much. Her love for you all is beyond expression in words. Her deeds are her language."

It is unfortunate that as the Compere children grew up they did not always understand their father's love for them as they came to understand it in after years. He exercised an uncompromising discipline because he believed it was his duty as a father to do so. This was sometimes so stern as to arouse resentment amounting almost to rebellion on the part of the young people. Josephine was loyal to her husband but she sympathized with her children, too. When Ebenezer journeyed away on a missionary expedition, the discipline was sometimes noticeably relaxed, the boys and girls indulged in games and music that their father frowned

upon, while Josephine, herself, curled up in bed with as frivolous a book as the missionary library afforded. One is safe in supposing that the selection of frivolous literature was not wide, for while the Comperes seem never to have been too poor to buy another religious book or subscribe to a Baptist paper, Ebenezer did not hold with reading that failed to accomplish some definite purpose. The need for recreation he seems not to have understood, and just having fun was to him a sinful waste of time and energy. It was difficult for growing boys and girls to understand such an attitude. Other needs he recognized fully and was willing to make any sacrifice to meet them.

Both parents considered an education imperative. But how were so many to be educated on a missionary's salary? Nine children had come into that home, one died in infancy and one little girl was burned to death at the age of three, a tragedy that deeply affected them all, especially the father. The last two children were twins, a boy and a girl. There were no names to be found good enough for them and, the family being unable to agree, the babies were nicknamed Jack and Sue. When they were older they selected names for themselves. Jack took his father's name of Ebenezer and added Lattimore, thus becoming another E. L. Compere; Sue added Mullins to her name for her mother and was henceforth Susie Mullins. Black-eyed Ebenezer Lattimore and blue-eyed Susie Mullins were no more alike than their names, either in looks or temperament; but they were a constant source of pride and pleasure to the rest of the family.

Schools on the frontier were few and those few frequent-

ly inadequate. When there was no school in the community where they were making their home, Ebenezer started one.

In 1872 he taught one term of public school in Charleston, where he was also part-time pastor, going from there to other preaching points as his duties would allow. Later on he built a schoolhouse in his own yard and taught a subscription school, so taking care of the needs of his own boys and girls as well as those of the other young people of the community. This school grew to such proportion, that he had several assistants and kept a number of boarding students who came from the surrounding territory. This success made him believe that there ought to be a Baptist school of college grade with a preparatory department, located somewhere in this border territory. At that time neither Arkansas Baptists nor those of the Indian territory had a school of college rank.

The promotion of such a school was given as one of the primary objectives when in 1876 the General Association of Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory was organized at Charleston and E. L. Compere was elected moderator. The other objectives were: "To promote missionary operations and especially home missions; the dissemination of religious and denominational literature; to promote Sabbath Schools." The churches of Dardanelle, Concord, and Clear Creek Associations had representatives there, and there were also a few individual contributors recognized as delegates, and two visitors, one from a neighboring association of Fayetteville and one from Tennessee. Among the items of business taken up was the election of a Board of Trustees "to establish and maintain a Literary Institution of high order."

The editor of a county paper of that section gives this story of the school: "Rev. E. L. Compere was a strong character with a broad vision and untiring energy. He was the leading Baptist preacher of his day in this section of the country . . . The educational advantages of this state at that time were very poor, and the Indian Territory was practically without schools. Meeting the need . . . for educational facilities, appealed to him to be the greatest task of the hour . . . He attacked the problem with characteristic energy . . . He roused the people and organized them for action . . . Out of this movement was born Buckner College. The Rev. Mr. Compere selected the site for his college with the eye of an artist . . . It was located in a beautiful little grove on the edge of Hodge's Prairie—with mountains for a background . . . and mountains across the prairies and woodland . . . Buckner College began in a beautiful dream, became an inspiring reality and passed into a mellow memory. As a college, it was not long successful, but it filled a useful mission . . . It was founded by a missionary and named for one. It was a missionary enterprise . . . It trained most of the teachers for this county and for over a generation those from adjoining sections . . . Its spirit lives in the lives of those whom its existence blessed."

This school was located at Witcherville, Sebastian County, and chartered in 1879. It was named for Henry F. Buckner, missionary to the Indians, who was living even then in the Indian territory where he had worked for many years. The first term was in 1882-83 and A. S. Worrell, a classmate of Ebenezer's, was the first president. In 1885 the Arkansas Baptist State Convention voted to es-

tablish a Baptist school and friends of Buckner College hoped to see it selected but it was too near the border of the state. When the site was finally chosen it took seventy-two ballots to reach a decision. The place was named Arkadelphia, and Ouachita College became the Baptist state school. Buckner College continued a somewhat checkered existence until 1906 when financial difficulties caused the final closing of its doors.

When Buckner College would no longer suffice for the education of the young Comperes, other provision had to be made. Dr. R. C. Burleson of Baylor in Texas offered Ebenezer a position as agent for the college at a salary that for that day and time was quite good. To accept would have meant leaving his border work and moving his family to Waco. It was a real temptation, but he could not see his way clear to give up the work to which he believed God had called him, not even to educate his children.

Family tradition has it that Josephine inherited some property from her grandmother's estate which she and Ebenezer invested in land when it was selling for \$1.25 an acre. As the West developed this land became increasingly valuable.

And as the children came to the age when they must be sent to school, the missionary father said to Dr. J. W. Conger, young and enterprising president of Ouachita College, "I have no money to send my child to school. If you will let him make a note for his expenses, I will put up this land as collateral. If for any reason he cannot pay the note, I will be responsible for it."

In only one instance did he find it necessary to pay the note. The youngest daughter, Susie Mullins, was sent to Central College, the Baptist school for girls at Conway, Arkansas, where the same arrangement had been made with President J. G. Lile. The following summer she died of typhoid fever. Enough of the land was sold to settle her college obligations. Five Comperes of this generation received their degrees from Ouachita College; William Lee and James Seth also went to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville. The older brother, because of ill health, did not graduate but James Seth received his Th.M. degree there.

The General Association had been organized not only to build a school, but also "to promote missionary operations, especially Home Missions, to disseminate religious and denominational literature and to promote Sabbath Schools." At its meeting in Russellville, Arkansas, in 1879, the committee on Domestic Missions reported, "Having no funds we could employ nobody. However, in April we commissioned E. L. Compere to labor in the bounds of the General Association as evangelist and agent. He reports that he visited several places and preached . . . At one point in the Choctaw Nation thirty-nine were added to the church. He took no collections but was cordially received . . . He believes that if an efficient minister were put into the field, he could make the work self-sustaining."

The year before, through the efforts of Dr. H. F. Buckner, the Baptist General Association of Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory had been recognized as one of the twenty-one organizations entitled to representation in

the Southern Baptist Convention. The Arkansas Baptist State Convention was another one of these; several states had more than one group represented in the Southwide organization, Texas at one time having three recognized bodies reporting.

An appeal was made to the Home Mission Board by this group of borderland Baptists for help. But the Board was in no position to begin any new work. In fact, it had lost most of its stations west of the Mississippi and every department of its work was in a deplorable state. The South had gone through a time of poverty and distress during the reconstruction days following the war that is reflected in all phases of Baptist work. The Home Mission Board in 1878-79 reported total receipts for the year of not quite seventeen thousand dollars. Such an amount could not possibly be spread out to take care of all the work which had been committed to its care.

At the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1879, a very discouraging report was heard. It was recognized that some of the states were not co-operating with the Home Mission Board and that added to this there was antagonism between some of their missionaries and representatives of other Baptist groups. Altogether it presented a dark picture, indeed. These matters were thoroughly discussed. Dr. I. T. Tichenor and Dr. John A. Broadus were the chief speakers. As to co-operation with the Northern Baptists, it was finally resolved, "That while firmly holding to the wisdom and policy of preserving our separate organizations, we are ready, as in the past, to co-operate cordially with them in promot-

ing the cause of Christ in our own and foreign lands." In conclusion, the Home Mission Board was heartily endorsed and commended and its work treated "with favor and distinction."

In 1882 the Home Board was reconstructed in the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention at Greenville, South Carolina; Dr. I. T. Tichenor was elected corresponding secretary; the headquarters were moved from Marion, Alabama, to Atlanta, Georgia. The newly-elected secretary turned his first attention to the western frontier. Among the missionaries appointed that year was S. G. Mullins, brother of Josephine Compere and father of Dr. E. Y. Mullins, who was the Board's representative at Corsicana, Texas; and E. L. Compere in Arkansas. As for this Arkansas missionary, it was reported at the General Association annual meeting in 1883, "Brother E. L. Compere, unpaid agent of the Home Mission Board, collected and paid out seventy-four dollars and five cents." This was for two months' salary for Wesley Smith, a native missionary to the Indians and ten dollars to Mrs. H. F. Buckner, whose husband had recently died. She and her children attended this session of the General Association and sang a number of hymns in the Creek language. Those in attendance were much impressed and pledged their cooperation in the work that she planned to continue in the Indian territory. They invited her to meet with them at the next annual session and bring "as many Indian brethren and sisters as she can to intermix our business and devotion with their sweet sacred songs."

At the 1884 meeting it was re-stated that the General

Association proposed to co-operate with the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. "Our work," they said, "is peculiar, in that it is to be mutual with the people of the Indian Territory. No other organization . . . can do this work . . . the responsibility on us is heavy . . . We should have at least fifteen or twenty missionaries at work in our own field, and bear our part in the Foreign Mission work."

They expressed appreciation for three hundred dollars which the Home Board had sent for mission work in the district and which had been divided to pay six missionaries for one month's work each. E. L. Compere was unanimously elected as general missionary for the association and charged "to labor in the interest of Home and Foreign Missions in our bounds." Pledges for his support were made to the amount of one hundred and seven dollars, and twenty bushels of corn. A request was made to the Board in Atlanta for enough help so that he could give his full time to the work. His commission from the Board the previous year had required him to raise his own salary on the field.

There were at that time at least two missionary societies within the bounds of the General Association, at Fellowship Church and at Waldron. These groups had each given twenty dollars to Foreign Missions and "each of these societies has on hand a splendid quilt for foreign missions." Brother Compere forwarded to the Foreign Mission Board a hundred dollars that year from the General Association.

In 1885 the Home Mission Board was again paying

three hundred dollars to be used for six missionaries to supplement their salaries. E. L. Compere had been able to give only part time to the work; feeble health was given as one reason and the necessity for teaching school three months was another. He recommended to the General Association that "special effort be made to keep a General Missionary in our boundary all the time at work, preaching, teaching the churches the duties of giving and how they may give, and collecting money and pledges for our mission work."

Dr. Tichenor wrote in March, 1886, in reply to a request for help in western Arkansas and the Indian territory, "I can only say that with every disposition to favor you, it is utterly out of our power to increase existing obligations for any purpose however worthy. The churches don't furnish us the means to do it—and we have no other resources. Perhaps I ought not to be impatient—they have been slowly rallying to us—and I have no doubt will continue to do so. But it is so slow compared with the demands of our work."

Again Dr. Tichenor wrote in June of the same year, "Yes, the baptisms by the missionaries in Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory were greater in proportion to time engaged and money expended than anywhere else on our mission field." Ebenezer had figured out that the baptisms in this field over a given length of time had cost a dollar and eighty-eight cents each of mission money.

In 1887 the Home Mission Board was in a better condition and promised a thousand dollars for the promotion of missions on this field. Resolutions were passed by the

General Association thanking them for this assistance and recommending the re-election of Brother Compere as corresponding secretary and superintendent of mission work.

In 1888 they not only received help from the Home Board but also from the Benevolent Department of the American Baptist Publication Society in Philadelphia which continued to help them to some extent over a period of several years. Besides making contributions to foreign missions the General Association also gave nearly two hundred dollars to support a mission in Idaho.

This was the year of the organization of Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention. Miss Annie Armstrong became the corresponding secretary of the new organization. Many of the brethren looked askance at this new venture. Some thought that the ladies ought not to bother their pretty little heads over business matters even for the Lord. Others were fearful lest having taken so much into their hands, they should undertake to run the whole missionary enterprise. Miss Armstrong was most careful to keep the work entirely "*auxiliary* to the Southern Baptist Convention" and to give no occasion of offense to anybody.

At one time Brother Compere forwarded to her a request from Miss Jannie York, a missionary teacher of Indian children, who asked for help in the work she was doing and for clothing for the children so that they might continue in school. Miss Armstrong replied, "I will by this mail write to Miss York and express my interest in the work she is doing, but cannot offer any assistance. I have no doubt you will think I am unnecessarily careful, but I



Josephine Isabella Mullins about 1860.

She Married E. L. Compere in 1863.



Rev. and Mrs. E. L. Compere about 1880.

am quite sure that the plan that the Woman's Missionary Union has adopted is the best one considering all circumstances, and I can not deviate from it in the slightest degree. The Boards, and the Boards alone, must be the ones to propose lines of work."

On another occasion Brother Compere had written to Miss Armstrong suggesting that a woman be put on the field to travel and organize missionary societies and promote the cause of missions generally, as a representative of the Home Mission Board.

This is a method so commonly employed today that one can hardly fail to be astonished at the reply, "I am sorry to disappoint you, but we do not feel that we could ask the Home Board to make any such arrangement. You probably know that the officers of the W.M.U. are not paid a salary for doing the work nor are their traveling expenses met . . . In Georgia and Texas, the secretaries of the Central Committees (of State W.M.U.'s) receive a salary but this arrangement is made by their own state organizations . . . I do not believe it would be well for us to ask the Home Board to make such an arrangement as you desire. You doubtless know how difficult it is for the Board to secure sufficient funds to carry on their work. In any new country, as Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory, there would have to be much foundation work done before large returns could be expected, and as this is a new departure, I think you will agree with me that the W.M.U. ought not to make such a suggestion to the Board. . . . Please allow me to say what I think you already know, that I thoroughly value the work you have done, and sym-

pathize with you in the many sacrifices you and Mrs. Compere have made in order to do this work."

It would perhaps have encouraged the missionary if he could have looked into the future to see that eventually his plan was adopted and that one of his own granddaughters, employed by the Arkansas W.M.U., did just the sort of work he had suggested in his western Arkansas mission field.

When it came to matters that had been intrusted to the hands of the women, Miss Armstrong was more than ready to assist. This was especially true in providing boxes of clothing for all the missionaries and their families in that needy field. One letter from her contains a list of nineteen names and concludes, "If there are other missionaries that you think it would be well for us to aid, please let me know as soon as possible, as there are some societies willing to send boxes and I have not names to send them."

Miss Armstrong was also generous in sending literature. In a letter to Mrs. Compere, she wrote, "I send by this mail three packages of literature. I hope you will find that it will interest the ladies of the different churches of your Association in working for missions . . . I have forwarded two hundred Prayer Cards . . . I think your committee would find that it would be good foundation work to get the Prayer Cards taken and used by the ladies of the churches of your Association . . . I am asking that you will not hesitate to let me know if we can at any time aid you in your work."

Brother Compere himself furnished the manuscript for some of the literature later sent out by Southern W.M.U. In 1895 was published his twelve-page leaflet entitled "Indian Missions for the Five Great Southern Tribes." In it he describes the work among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw and Seminole tribes. He gives the history of Baptist work especially that which his parents did among the Creeks and shows how that work has been blessed: "There was not one Christian among all the Creek Indians when my parents were first missionaries in the Old Nation in Alabama. In 1879 I attended the Creek Association. What a sight! What a service! Two thousand people . . . Not one of these Indian brethren knew how to say 'Excuse me' when called on to pray . . . Every one would sing and Oh the sweetness of those songs! The last night they preached and prayed and sang all night till sunrise. Look on my mother's meeting in the Old Nation (when the Christians were whipped for attending services); then on this, a little more than fifty years after, and tell me, Will you help Indian missions? Will you? When the Lord leads his people they should follow. When He prospers their work they should push it. He led the Baptists to the work of Indian Missions in the South and crowned their efforts with a success that has not often been equalled. His blessing on their labor is His unmistakable order to 'go forward.' "

So wrote the son of Lee and Susannah in a ringing challenge to Southern Baptists just a few months before his death. He received copies of this leaflet in November, exactly ninety years after the day his parents had set sail from Bristol.

The report of E. L. Compere, superintendent of missions, to the Board of the General Association of Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory, in 1893, is typical of the reports that were made during the early eighteen-nineties, and is worthy of note. There were thirty churches organized that year; fifty-six Sabbath schools, twenty-two permanent prayer meetings established, and seven "Ladies Missionary Societies." Baptisms for the year were a thousand and seventeen; additions to the churches by letter, eight hundred and sixty.

Fifty missionaries are named who had been employed during the year. "The work of these brethren is one of faith and sacrifice," said the superintendent, "most of them have been obliged to labor with their hands for a large part of their support. Only a very few have been able to give all their time to the ministry. As far as possible we have secured some clothing for their families, and most of them have received some money."

The superintendent's report was made up from those received from the missionaries, many of them such as this:

"Baptisms 32

everything received on the field, corn, meat, money,
52.90

1 Box of goods from the Society

organized 1 church, 3 prayer meetings, 2 Sabbath
Schools

Nary a ladies society

miles travailed 800 20

days Laber 26

ordained 3 deacons 1 minister

Pleas excuse My poor Report.

Signed _____

you cant tell how I thanked and praised the Lord for the Box of goods I received."

Some of the Indian missionaries could not write a report and had to get a friend to help them. Many of them were like Brother J. W. Hulsey,¹ who is part Indian, who said, "When Brother Compere found me I could not more than read and write. He told me what to study and helped me get books and papers." In 1932 Brother Hulsey preached the Annual State Convention sermon at Arkadelphia, Arkansas, one that would have done credit to any college and seminary man; and to this day, in the hill country of western Arkansas, he preaches the Gospel effectively. He is the sort of man that Peter Folsom long ago asked the Home Board to send to the Choctaw nation "A smart, good, old missionary."

That year of 1893 the General Association received from the Home Mission Board nearly two thousand dollars and the missionaries collected on the field towards their support \$1,880.34, making the average amount received for each missionary seventy-five dollars per year. An estimated value of the boxes of clothing from Southern W.M.U. was two thousand dollars, or an average of forty dollars for each missionary family.

But, as Miss Armstrong pointed out, "This help is so very uncertain, that in no case does the Home Board wish

¹ Brother Hulsey died on November 17, 1944.

that it should influence salaries. I believe the ladies try to be conscientious in estimating their gifts, but while they may represent the amount of money that is placed upon them, yet of course the missionaries, if they had had that amount of money put in their hands, would have spent it very differently."

From this group had gone an offering of two hundred forty dollars for foreign missions. Year by year these offerings to promote the kingdom in lands afar were sent in. No wonder Dr. H. A. Tupper, corresponding secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, wrote in acknowledging one such suffering, "Do let me thank you and your people for your grand contribution to Foreign Missions. It seems to me one of the grandest made in the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The superintendent of missions, reviewing the work for the year, says, "Seeing that the Lord blesses our work more and more each year, it becomes us prudently and prayerfully to press forward."

In August of 1895 Brother Compere attended the meeting of the Creek Association in Eufaula in the Indian territory, and in September he went to South Canadian for the twentieth session of the General Association of Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory. The vote for moderator was by secret ballot, and when they were counted it was found that E. L. Compere had been unanimously elected. Except for two years in its early history, he had presided over every session. He had seen the work grow from its small beginnings in 1876 to an organization that

fostered a paper, *The Indian Missionary*, published at South Canadian in the Indian Territory; a college at Witcherville, in Arkansas; more than fifty missionaries within its own bounds. It had helped to support a mission in Idaho, and year by year had contributed to foreign missions. As the West was developing, building railroads, seeing small communities become prosperous towns, and towns become thriving cities, Baptist work was growing too. Each succeeding annual report of the General Association reflects this growth.

The moderator in his address to the body called attention to the growth and what had been accomplished, and challenged them to continue to go forward. During the meeting he was seized with a nervous chill. At the conclusion of the session he started home on the train and was met at Mansfield, the nearest railroad point, by Brother Ridling, one of the faithful missionaries of the Association, who took him the rest of the sixty rough miles in a buggy to his home at Old Dallas. Ebenezer Lee Compere had presided over his last association and preached his last sermon.

As his strength became less and less, his children were called home. One was missing. James Seth had been in Ouachita College for one session and part of another. In the fall of 1894 he went to Mercer University where he remained for the whole session. Dr. J. B. Gambrell had written to Ebenezer: "It is a joy to me to put my life in such a student to represent me when I am in heaven." But he had worked too hard to maintain the standard his father held for him, and early the following summer his health

had failed him, his plans for the future seemed to be completely disrupted; rebellious and miserable, he had left home without revealing his destination. For many weeks his family had not heard from him.

Now Ebenezer wanted to see Jim. He had set his heart on this mettlesome, black-eyed son of his continuing in the footsteps of his father, becoming a preacher of the gospel; and he refused to give up his frail tenure on life until he could see him once more.

At last one of the brothers remembered, "If anybody knows where to reach Jim, Pen Lile does."

This was quite true. For more than two years now, she had been able, on a moment's notice, to tell James Compere's whereabouts. Tradition has it that when first James set foot in the chapel at Ouachita College, he saw this little blue-eyed, curly-haired girl across the aisle and asked the boy sitting next to him, "Who is that?"

When he was told that she was Professor Lile's little sister, Pennie, he had replied, "She's going to be my girl." And so she had been, almost from that very date; and so she is today.

At once they wrote to Pen Lile who was then in Columbia County getting ready to go to Central College at Conway, where her brother was president. Almost immediately Jim was on his way back home. When he stepped off the train at Mansfield, there was Brother Ridling, faithful friend, with his horse and buggy, waiting to take the boy to his father.

For some time Ebenezer had been too weak even to

conduct family worship. That evening Brother Ridling read passages of Scripture and prayed with them and for them all. Their hearts must have been full to overflowing as he thanked God for their father's life and all he had done in advancing the kingdom of God on earth. The children remembered how year in and year out he had loved them and prayed for them and counted on them to become useful Christian men and women. They forgot the times when they had misunderstood each other; and the times when they had thought their father harsh and unsympathetic. They loved him then as they never had before, and they pledged themselves to live lives more nearly like the ideal he had always held for them.

After the prayer Ebenezer talked a long time with his family about the mission work, what he hoped yet to do, what he hoped they would do. Quietly he went off to sleep and when the family was astir in the morning, they found him in a coma from which he never regained consciousness. He died that Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1895.

The funeral service was conducted by Brother J. F. McLeod and Brother Ridling, using as a text 2 Samuel 3:38, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel."

One who had worked with him through the years wrote, "He faithfully labored with the people of this border and the Indian Territory. . . . The Lord blessed his labors and no man on this border ever did more to advance the cause of Christ than E. L. Compere."

The editor of *The Mission Journal* for January, 1896,

wrote of him: "He was a man of wonderful energy. His letters, which came to the office sometimes, gave accounts of his journeyings and the hardships he endured—night travel over dangerous mountain roads, swimming rivers, sleeping in comfortless cabins, and all for the cause of the Master he had espoused, and for the missionaries under his care, with whom he so deeply sympathized, and for whom no service was too hard.

"He was the intimate friend of Buckner, the Apostle of the Creek Indians. He supported him in great trial that came upon him in the last days of his life, and wept in sincerest sorrow over his grave. The Creek Baptists will think of him as their warmest and truest friend among the white brethren, and cherish his memory as they do that of Buckner. And the white Baptists of the Territory will mourn the loss of their leader."

Would he have been more willing to leave his work and his loved ones if he could have had a glimpse into the future, if he could have known that Jim and Pen Lile Compere with their three small daughters in another ten years would be on their way to Africa, to the place where A. D. Phillips had hoped Ebenezer would come? If he had seen his dearly loved borderland churches pledging to support his son on the foreign field? It would have rejoiced his heart no doubt; but he could say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

One can but think that he died completely satisfied to

leave that work and those whom he loved in the care of their Heavenly Father. From that "cloud of witnesses" by whom we are encompassed, no doubt he has seen his missionary efforts carried on in the lives of his children and grandchildren and even his great-grandchildren.

Dr. J. F. Love, in writing about the going of the James Seth Comperes to Africa said, "In early manhood E. L. Compere longed to go as a foreign missionary to the Yoruba country, Africa, the very field in which God is greatly blessing his son today. The meager foreign mission resources and the undeveloped state of our home churches at the time, denied him the gratification of this holy ambition. God gave him Home Missions work to do instead. On this home field he wrought faithfully. And as a result, now that God has called his son to the foreign field on which the father's heart had been set, the associations which he organized assume the son's support. . . . Thus grows the Home Missionary's influence. In some measure every missionary at home today is contributing, as E. L. Compere did, to Foreign Missions and the salvation of the ends of the earth while he is doing the work directly at hand. William J. Dawson says, 'the greatest of all missionaries to the heathen may prove to be the evangelist who never leaves his native land'."

Who shall say which is Home and which is Foreign missions? Were Lee and Susannah Compere, going from England to Jamaica and then to the Indians in Alabama, and then to farther Western frontiers, Home missionaries or Foreign missionaries? When Ebenezer and Josephine planted churches on the border, which were they? Let us

rather concern ourselves with being missionaries, with telling the Good News where it is "news," it makes no difference about the classification; remembering as Ebenezer said in one of his last reports to the General Association of Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory, "Seeing that the Lord more and more blesses our work each year, it becomes us prudently and prayerfully to press forward."

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